SHOUT
SHARE
IT

M. N. ROY—THE MAN

Yah bhi nahin koi Devata, Bhagwan mar gaya
Neta, Shahenshah, na Suleman mar gaya
Hindu koi mara na Musalman mar gaya
Itnisi baat hai, ek insaan mar gaya

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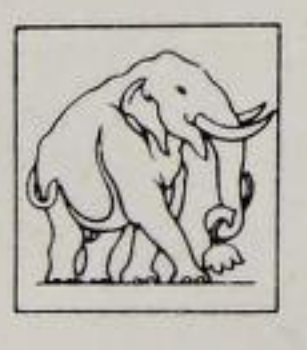
M. N. ROY

—THE MAN

An Incomplete Royana

J. B. H. Wadia



POPULAR PRAKASHAN,
BOMBAY

to

D. B. KARNIK

who encouraged and guided me
in the publication of this book

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Foreword

The life of a great man has many facets and it is but natural that attention is focussed on the primary activity of such a man whatever it be. In the case of Comrade M. N. Roy it happened to be politics. His political activities began as a revolutionary terrorist when he was in his teens. Soon thereafter he embraced Marxism. In the course of his many-sided interests he discarded the politics and philosophy of Marx and eventually became a radical humanist by the end of the Second World War. His concern for mankind went beyond geographical frontiers. His political activities cover India, Mexico, Moscow, Tashkent, China and Germany. He strode like a colossus through the continents of the world; and with no formal education, he came to acquire vast knowledge and expertise in political science, natural sciences, philosophy and other subjects. It is a mystery even to his admirers how he could find time to do so in the midst of an over-busy chequered political career and peripatetic life.

As Mr. J. B. H. Wadia rightly observes in his Introduction a man like M. N. Roy is born once in a generation or so. When we take stock of his fantastic activities and thrilling escapades in several countries, they seem like so many exploits in a novel of adventure.

Born as Narendra Bhattacharya, son of a poor school teacher in a small village in Bengal, he sailed the seven seas under various names.

During the First World War when he had succeeded in evading the vigilant eyes of the British Intelligence, he was "Father Martin". When he reached the USA he became "M. N. Roy". Jumping the bail he reached Mexico and became "Comrade M. N. Roy".

All that he did there as chief adviser in establishing a Communist government under President Carranza is too well known to be stated here. Even today he is held in great affection in Mexico.

When at Borodin's instance Lenin invited him to Moscow he travelled incognito in Europe, even hiding himself in a railway wagon. Once he was in the USSR he speedily rose to great

heights. Lenin asked Roy to submit his thesis on "The Colonial Question" along with his own; and Roy had the unique distinction of finding both his and Lenin's thesis adopted.

When he returned to Moscow after the communist debacle in China he fell from grace and became a scapegoat of Stalin's ruthless regime. Had he continued his stay in the USSR he might have been liquidated. But thanks to the help of his friends he escaped to Berlin where he became a militant critic of Stalin's brand of Communism.

Sometime in 1929 he came in contact with Tayab Shaikh. To other Indians he was now "Mr. Richard", a Mexican who was ostensibly interested in carrying on research work on Indian students involved in our struggle for freedom.

When Roy decided to come back to India he travelled as "Dr. Mahmud". But now the British Intelligence Service succeeded in arresting him. All his aliases and even his original name Narendra Bhattacharya were forgotten and thenceforth he came to be known in history as Comrade M. N. Roy. Indeed, amazing as his adventures have been, his achievements in politics and the vast lore of knowledge in various fields are even more amazing.

Mr. V. B. Karnik, who was probably the closest associate and friend of Com. M. N. Roy, has recently written a political biography of Mr. M. N. Roy. It is a great contribution towards the understanding of Roy's political activities.

But there has been a strange gap in all Royist literature. As Mr. Wadia states in his introduction:

"... No one seems to have cared to dwell on Roy, the Man—a side which is no less an integral part of his personality than its other facets ..."

The author has tried to fill up this gap. However incomplete he may consider his effort at what he has termed "Royana", he has rendered valuable service in highlighting the lovable personality of Roy, the Man. Everyone, and especially the Royists, are indebted to him for his book, the first of its kind in Royist literature notwithstanding its sketchiness.

The present book is not intended as a biography, political or otherwise, of Com. M. N. Roy. It, however, supplements and brings to light many fascinating aspects of Roy's private life. The author had the advantage of coming in close contact with

Roy and his illustrious wife Ellen Roy. In fact, whenever the Roys came to Bombay, they used to be the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Wadia in their bungalow, Casa da Vinci, and many of these memoirs are connected with Roy's stay there.

The first impression which one gets on a reading of these memoirs is that Roy had a versatile mind. He was not only at home in politics, economics and philosophy but also deeply interested in literature and art and Western music—even films. No subject was taboo to him nor did he have any inhibition. He was a connoisseur of all that is good in life, from rare European wines to Chinese menu. Royists from Bombay used to join the Roys at Casa da Vinci in the evenings for discussions and drinks and in the course of these dinner meetings Roy used to narrate anecdotes regarding persons whom he had met during his stay abroad describing their peculiar characteristics with humour and understanding.

The author has narrated quite a few and hitherto unpublished anecdotes about Roy. Those about Roy's interest in chess, Western music, dance, stage plays, films and literature reveal the many-splendoured personality of Roy, the Man.

It is well known that in spite of the requests of some Royists, Roy had refused to write his autobiography. His argument was that a man cannot but be egoistic when it comes to recording his memoirs. But when at long last he did publish the first and only volume of his autobiography it showed that his fears were unfounded so far as he was personally concerned. It is a sad loss to history that Roy died soon thereafter.

The author has made a special reference to Roy's eagerness to please his friends and do nothing to hurt the feelings of his hosts. Roy cheerfully ate whatever was offered to him. I may be permitted to refer to a personal experience of mine. Com. Roy and Mrs. Ellen Roy were my guests in my Belgaum bungalow for a week. The only food I offered was vegetarian and the Roys ate the food cheerfully although I could see that it must have bored them as it went on continuously for a week. I was conscious of that aspect, but since my old father and mother were living in the same house, I could not switch on to any non-vegetarian hotel in Belgaum.

I am tempted to refer to another anecdote which Roy told us, the Maharashtra radicals, when we had met in Poona for our

annual conference which Roy had asked me to preside over. In the course of the toasts he told us the following story:

Shortly after the death of Lenin, the meeting of the Communist International took place in the Kremlin—Moscow, under the auspices of Stalin. Delegates from all over the world had assembled at that meeting. A dinner party was arranged by Stalin in honour of the delegates, and toasts after toasts were taken. After many rounds of Vodka all the delegates went under the table. Only Roy and Stalin remained to have the last. At that time Stalin jocularly said pointing his finger to the European delegates: "This is Europe lying prostate and this is Asia holding the fort" pointing to himself who was Georgian and M. N. Roy who was an Indian.

The story of the Indian Nationalist whom Roy had unwittingly treated with beef steak in a Berlin restaurant reveals Roy's concern to spread happiness even by telling a "white lie". When someone questioned Roy if his explanation was not in contradiction of his anti-God attitude, he counter-questioned: "Who am I to deprive a man of his crutches so long as he cannot walk without them?" This shows how tolerant he was in private life.

The author has also dealt with the camaraderie that existed between himself and his disciple-cum-friends. In that context he has mentioned the names of Tayab Shaikh, V. B. Karnik, G. D. Parikh, D. B. Karnik, Pathan Shetty and others. He has rightly pointed out that the relationship between Roy and his comrades was not that of guru and shishya in the orthodox sense of the term. They were relations of equality although these comrade-friends always sought advice from Roy, duly acknowledging his towering superiority. These discussions were always open and uninhibited. Roy believed in complete freedom of expression; and whenever there was a difference of opinion he tried to bring his comrades round to his point of view by persuasion only.

It is also fortunate that the author has a "fatal tendency" to run away with his pen. It has induced him to include material extraneous to Royana proper in his text. Extraneous or not, it is relevant to an assessment of Roy's personality which would not have been the case if the author has stuck merely to anecdotes. This material succinctly brings out the connection bet-

ween the anecdotes and Comrade Roy's life work.

The chapters on Roy and some famous personalities in Indian political life, such as those on Gandhiji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose and Jayaprakash Narayan, are not only informative and interesting but also suffused with objective analysis. They are strewn with open admiration for Roy's political opponents. Evidently the author has drawn inspiration from Roy's own writings on them. There never was a trace of rancour in Roy whenever he criticized those who differed from his line of thinking.

Roy was a stern critic of Indian obscurantism. At the same time he always emphasised the need to salvage the abiding values in our heritage which have relevance to modern times. Roy was a rationalist who believed in scientific politics. That is why he brushed aside political expediency in favour of his intellectual integrity. Had Roy been an opportunist he would have continued in the hierarchy of the Kremlin or after returning to India even become a popular leader of Indian National Congress next only to Gandhiji and Nehru.

After joining the Congress Party in 1937, Roy founded the League of Radical Congressmen and started publishing the *Independent India* Weekly. Later on Roy and his comrades (I am deliberately avoiding the use of the term "followers" which Roy always disfavoured) converted the League into the Radical Democratic Party of India. Roy and Ellen as well as V.B. Karnik and his wife Vimlabai had to make considerable sacrifices in publishing their paper week after week. When the Radical Democratic Party was dissolved and converted into the Radical Humanist Movement of India *Independent India* was also changed to *Radical Humanist*. And it goes to the credit of Barrister V. M. Tarkunde that the journal is regularly published as a monthly from Delhi, containing courageous and learned articles on several subjects.

The author has cited instances of Roy's militant opposition to fascism which he rightly considered as the greatest danger to world freedom. That is why he never hesitated to criticise unequivocally those Indian nationalists who had failed to envisage the dire consequences of a fascist victory in their patriotic fervour. Roy was not just an arm-chair idealist. The uncanny insight which he had in world affairs rested on the

solid foundation of rationalism and humanism. Even in 1941 when the Allied forces were fighting Hitler's blitzkrieg advances with back to the wall he had predicted their ultimate victory on the strength of his analytical acumen. Not only that, but he also predicted that under the pressure of objective factors Great Britain would be compelled to concede freedom to India. He rightly assessed that British investments were bound to dwindle in the successful prosecution of the war of attrition and hence Great Britain would have to liquidate its Empire on which "the sun never set" in their own self-interest and survival . . .

The author has briefly but nonetheless lucidly described the question of the acceptance of Rs. 13,000/- a month from Government during the war years. Roy justified the said grant on the plea that he and his comrades were already carrying on their anti-fascist activities and if he received the money for furthering that cause, there was nothing wrong in doing so openly. He had no skeletons in the cupboard to hide.

Notwithstanding his admiration for Trotsky, Roy sided with Stalin after Lenin's death. But he was disillusioned with Stalin's cruelty and inhumanity in liquidating his comrades-in-arms, in particular Comrade Bukharin whom Roy considered to be the brain-child of Lenin. Roy had firmly believed that at the end of the Second World War, Stalin would play the role assigned to him by history as the standard-bearer of Red Napoleonism, meaning thereby that just as Napoleon's victories ushered in the era of modernity in Europe, Stalin's victories would bring socialism to Europe.

It is significant to note that when Jayaprakash Narayan was a Congress Socialist he had ignored Roy's advice in his uncannily predictive "Letters To Congress Socialists". He had lucidly pointed out the contradiction inherent in the use of the term "Congress Socialists" which had been adopted by leftist Congressmen. He had asked J.P. whether this was a new brand of socialism. He also emphasised at that time that neither the Congress nor the country was ripe for ushering in an era of socialism and therefore, the first task was to win political independence from the British Imperialist rule. At that time he opined that power should not pass to big capital and hence all those inside the Congress should assert themselves as radicals

and not socialists or capitalists. Ultimately J.P. veered round to most of the views of Roy including his original programme to bring about the social emancipation of the Indian people through the formation of "People's Committees" from village level upwards. At the time of Roy's death on January 25, 1954 J.P. wrote: "Roy was, perhaps, never more wanted than just when he died."

It may come as a surprise to many that Roy knew of higher mathematics so well that he could cross swords with Sir Shah Mohamed Sulaiman, Kt., Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court. The latter had challenged certain calculations of Einstein in 1936. Roy refuted Sir Mohamed's arguments. As is well known, soon thereafter Einstein's theory received verification at the time of the total solar eclipse in Japan.

Roy admired Gandhiji for his attempts at removing untouchability and eradicating poverty. What he did not accept was the programme of the Mahatma to bring about social reforms within the framework of *chaturvarnya*. But Roy was in total agreement with Gandhiji working on the moral plane. In the admirable article written in the *Independent India* after Gandhiji's tragic assassination Roy paid tribute to Gandhiji's principle that "End would never justify means". According to him this was a special contribution of Mahatma Gandhi to Indian politics.

In spite of the fact that Roy and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were poles apart in their ideologies, he had unstinted admiration for the straight-forwardness, fearlessness and integrity of the Sardar.

The author has made a special reference to Swamy Agehananda Bharati, an Austrian nee Leonard Fischer. He had come to India to pursue his studies in Sanskrit and since leaving India has been a Professor of Philosophy at the Syracuse University, USA. There is reason to believe that as a result of his contact with Roy he gave up his stance for vegetarianism and came to the conclusion that the Ochre Robe was just an empty formality.

Dr. Richard Park, Ph.D. of Michigan University and Chief Director of Asia Foundation was also a close friend of Roy and Ellen and used to stay with them in Dehra Dun during weekends. He was by Roy's bedside many times when his health

had become critical.

The influence of Roy's ideas on Indian politics has never been given due recognition. From his *India in Transition* to *The Draft Constitution of India* and *The People's Plan* (written by G. D. Parikh and Barrister V. M. Tarkunde under his guidance) there is ample proof of that influence for anyone who cares to find. J.P.'s *Total Revolution* is as much inspired by Roy as by Gandhiji. The idea of developing "People's Committees" at village level was more thoroughly gone into by Roy than anyone else.

The last three chapters namely "Some Charges Against Roy", "Was Roy A Failure?" and "Was Roy Uncompromising?" reveal the author's objective outlook. While laying bare Roy's shortcomings he also succeeds in redeeming Roy's greatness as a normal human being. M. N. Roy stands before us as a man who was as interested in all the small things of life as the serious ones. Certainly Roy was a complete man, a man of modern renaissance.

It is a cliche to say that behind the success of every man there is a woman. But it is, more often than not, also true. Ellen Roy, wife and life companion of Roy was his alter ego. The author has tried to do justice to her wherever possible.

Mr. Wadia, popularly known as J.B.H. has been primarily a film maker of over forty years standing. But those who know him intimately are also aware of his extra-curricular pursuits. He is an M.A. in English literature and a stylist in his own way. His chapters on Roy's last illness are charged with emotion. When Nehru came to see the dying Roy and held his hand in silence the author waxes poetical and writes:

> "Nobody will know what thoughts raced through their giant minds in that interval of time—timelessness."

He has been a founder-member of the Radical Democratic Party of India and since its dissolution an active and dedicated member of the Radical Humanist movement. Not only has his book the merit of sincerity but also impartiality. All his admiration and affection for Roy has not deterred him from making an objective assessment of Roy's actions and behaviour. As a devotee of Roy he has placed his hero on a high pedestal but has also faced him squarely. This is the stuff that a true

Royist is made of and as Roy himself had wished his followers to be.

On the whole, the author has written a book containing interesting memoirs relating to various incidents in the life of Com. M. N. Roy and has thrown a flood-light on the private life of the great politico-philosophical revolutionary. These memoirs will be and ought to be read not only by Royists and Roy's friends but also by the general public. The author has rendered signal service to the great man, who was not only intellectually great but also large hearted and affectionate.

— V. A. NAIK

"Prabodhan",
Prabhat Road,
Pune 411 004.
August 10, 1982.

" I have always felt that the world has lost much
by not preserving the small talk of its great men."

—ERIC HOFFER, in *The Ordeal of Change.*

Preface

Ever since the death of M. N. Roy it had become a convention with the Royists to hold meetings in his memory on every January 25 at many centres in India. Now that his exact date of birth has been established, namely March 21, these meetings have begun to be held on that day.

In Bombay we held our meetings under the auspices of the local Renaissance Club in the Servants of India Society Hall at Prarthana Samaj. Opportunity permitting, I must have pointed out in my customary speeches, more often than not, that the subject of *Roy, the Man* had somehow or other gone by default in the entire Royist literature.

I had naturally hesitated to fill the gap because my experiences were more or less confined to my contact with Roy at our Casa da Vinci. Even so, I had begun to toy with the idea and make notes of whatever I could remember.

When I had spoken about it to my friend and that stalwart Royist, G. D. Parikh sometime in 1976 he had shown his willingness to help me in every way he could. Alas, it was not to be. He died suddenly and too soon. But in the meantime I had already started writing and continued doing so on the precept of "something is better than nothing".

Now, I suffer from an incorrigible weakness. I run away with my pen in the course of writing on a given subject. In result, extraneous matter creeps in, which may be charitably spelt as "striking at a tangent", as it were. And then I do not resist the temptation of pushing it in the text proper, (say, something like the sub-plot in a drama) at the risk of being dubbed a diffuse writer. Hence the reader will come across a good deal of matter which has no direct bearing on my *Royana*, but which refers to Roy's thoughts and/or dilates on persons who had come in his contact. It is for the reader to judge whether I have thereby succeeded in highlighting the personality of Roy or not.

I am also aware that repetitiousness is a cardinal sin which no professional writer commits: and I have no illusions about my being one, even if I may happen to be a seasoned screen playwright. Hence I ask my readers to bear with my style of

writing and be indulgent toward certain repetitions which I could not help retaining.

I might not have published my effort in a book form but for the timely help of my friend and another Royist, D. B. Karnik. The material he supplied has certainly enriched the contents of my book.

I am also thankful to Dr. Indumati Parikh for passing on to me a few incidents about Goverdhan which I have set out in my chapter "Roy and G. D. Parikh and Indu Tai".

It was also a fortunate coincidence for me that when I was striving to give shape to my book, V. B. Karnik, the doyen among Royists, was also busy finalising his magnum opus, *M.N. Roy—A Political Biography.* It has already been hailed as the most authoritative political biography of Comrade Roy. I was thinly associated with him inasmuch as he had entrusted me with the task of correcting his manuscript. I have not acknowledged my debt to him anywhere in the text. But this much is certain that had my friend not given me that opportunity, I would have slipped badly in stating a few important facts in their proper perspective.

When I approached Justice V. A. Naik with a request to write the Foreword I had no idea that he was busy planning a book on "The Philosophy of Natural Sciences". I am deeply grateful to him for having readily agreed to do so in the midst of his arduous task. He is one of the early Royists and had come in close contact with Comrade Roy ever since he had come out of jail in 1936 and formed the League of Radical Congressmen. Mr. Naik is deeply versed in Royism, Radical Democracy and Radical Humanism and his Foreword has embellished my modest effort appreciably, indeed.

I am aware that my *Royana* is just what we call a "jhalak" in film parlance. It is incomplete and its chief merit, if I may say so, may lie in its being tantalising, say, like a film trailer. There must be many more interesting anecdotes and facts about Roy known to several persons who had come in contact with him. If my efforts were to serve as an incentive to them and they convey their experiences to me I will be tempted to bring out a revised edition of the book.

Despite all my overt effusiveness for Roy, the Man, far be it from me to make a demi-god of him. Roy himself would have

disapproved of such 'glorification'. As he himself had said somewhere: "Every god has his clay feet. Otherwise he won't be a god".

One last word. No book on Roy, the Man which ignores the noble and significant part played by Ellen Roy in his life can ever be a faithful record. She was his devoted wife, inspiring companion and irreplaceable Personal Secretary. Nay, even his untiring nurse during his last illness. She was always by his side from the day she met him in early 1937 till he died on January 25, 1954.

Although an intellectual in her own right, she was content to keep herself in the background. But those who came in closer contact with her knew that Roy gave the final shape to his writings only after discussing them with Ellen. He always respected her opinions, even when he differed from her.

Every time Roy spoke in public, and many times when he was engaged in discussion with the Royists, Ellen was ready with her pen and notebook jotting down his speeches and observations in shorthand with "short cuts" to several words and phrases which Roy was wont to make use of often. Certainly, Ellen was Roy's alter ego.

Bombay
March 21, 1983.

— J. B. H. WADIA

"Jatinda was a good man and I have still to find a better . . ."

"Good men are seldom given a place in the galaxy of the great. It will continue to be so until goodness is recognised as the measure of genuine greatness."

from M. N. Roy's article on Jatin Mukherji published in *Independent India* of February 27, 1949.

1. *Introduction*

A man like M. N. Roy is born once in a generation. If any individual can be said to have lived a full life, it was Roy. He was above all a man of modern renaissance. His experiences were simply fantastic and his versatility equally amazing. He had learned his lessons in the school of life and as such was an autodidact. He was at home not only in politics and history but also deeply versed in philosophy, physics and mathematics, even law.

Over and above this, he was also interested in literature, art and music. One has only to go through his *Letters from Jail* to find it out for oneself. He had an uncanny gift of absorbing the fundamentals of any subject he cared to be interested in and could discourse on it with the sure touch of a master. Endowed with an uncommon retentive memory, he could summon up relevant references and cross references at a moment's notice and fortify his arguments in as dispassionate manner as humanly possible. I do not know of any other person who was so often right in his predictions based on astute analysis as M. N. Roy. Even so, he never forgot the stark reality that history is not made by logic. He knew that the last unknown factor like the course of the indeterminate atom in physics, always had the last word in upsetting the apple cart of any scholar or saint; and when he found that the course of events had not borne out his analysis he did not hesitate to correct himself. Roy could do so because he was ever a man in quest of truth. It was this dedication which had enabled him to continually widen his world of thought and grow from stature to stature. Because of his non-conformism he was sometimes misunderstood by those who could not fathom the depths of his mind and because of which he was sinisterly maligned by those who had a political axe to grind.

He wrote incessantly from 1916 onwards till the year of his death in 1954. His prolific writings are on a variety of subjects in half a dozen languages. His voluminous notes and drafts, all handwritten during his incarceration—between 1931 amd 1936—and titled "The Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science" await publication as yet. It is a herculean job for

those Royists who have planned to publish them in ten volumes. Roy was not a stylist like, say, Jawaharlal Nehru who ranks among the best writers of English prose. Roy's language is sometimes involved. But his argumentation is always rational.

Had he been a novelist he might have been Voltairian in his style. His "Memoirs of a Cat" points in that direction. Be that as it may, everything that he wrote bears the stamp of a giant intellect and the signature of a personality dedicated to honesty of thought.

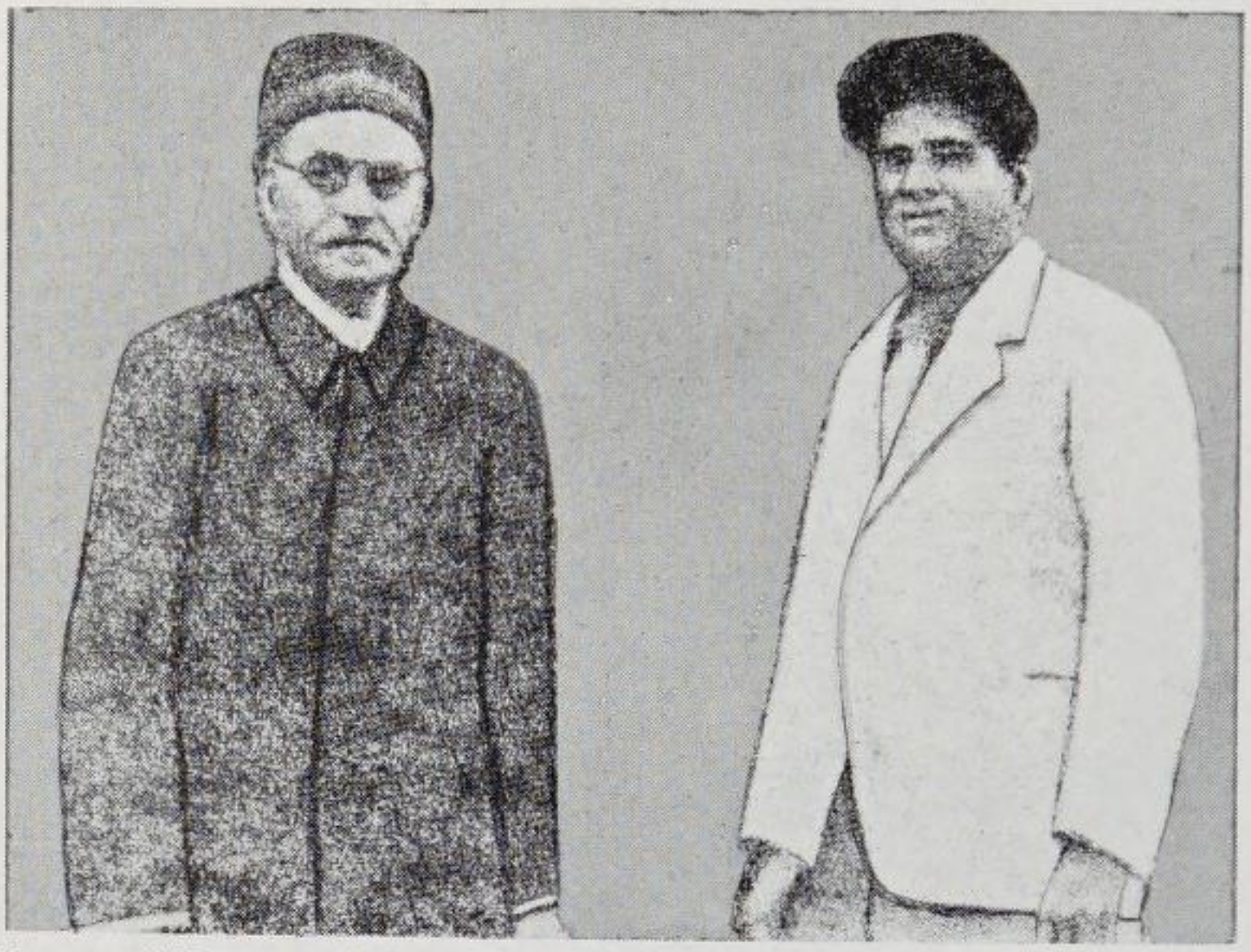
Roy was always a pathfinder. But he was not a parsimonious traveller. He was also a determined guide to his followers. This was proved time and again in discussion with his comrades. When he had sudden light, *en passant,* he did not wish to be a lone explorer into unfathomed regions when there were affinitive friends around him. He invited them to share the thrill of a new adventure in the offing with him. He never stooped to mortgage his mind to anyone on earth. He was ever the eternal questioner and as such offended those who accepted the facile assumptions of civilisation. A non-conformist that he was, he was in a sense like "L'Etranger" of Albert Camus, another great humanist. He was a "free thinker",—a term which he did not relish from a strictly philosophical standpoint and avoided it as semantically inaccurate.

Roy tackled every circumscribed problem from a universal approach to it. His mind moved so fast that he could not help analysing a given problem without bringing into its orbit the relevance and effect on it of several branches of knowledge. It can be said that Roy's method was microscopic and macroscopic at the same time. The *Plain View of London* in its review of his two volumes of "Reason, Romanticism and Revolution" said that Roy "had the intensity of a philosopher at grips with the problems of his time for whom all history is contemporary history". Like Pythagoras whom Roy used to quote, nothing human was alien to him.

Much has been written on and about Roy. Admirers and detractors and critics have all vied with one another, as it were, in memorialising Roy—Roy the early nationalist and terrorist, Roy the marxist, communist and revolutionary, Roy the philosopher and historian, Roy the radical democrat and last

Courtesy : David King Collection, London.

At the Second Conference of the Comintern at the Uritsky Palace (1920); Lenin and Gorky standing - Ziniviev (next to Gorky) - M. N. Roy standing next to Lenin's sister.

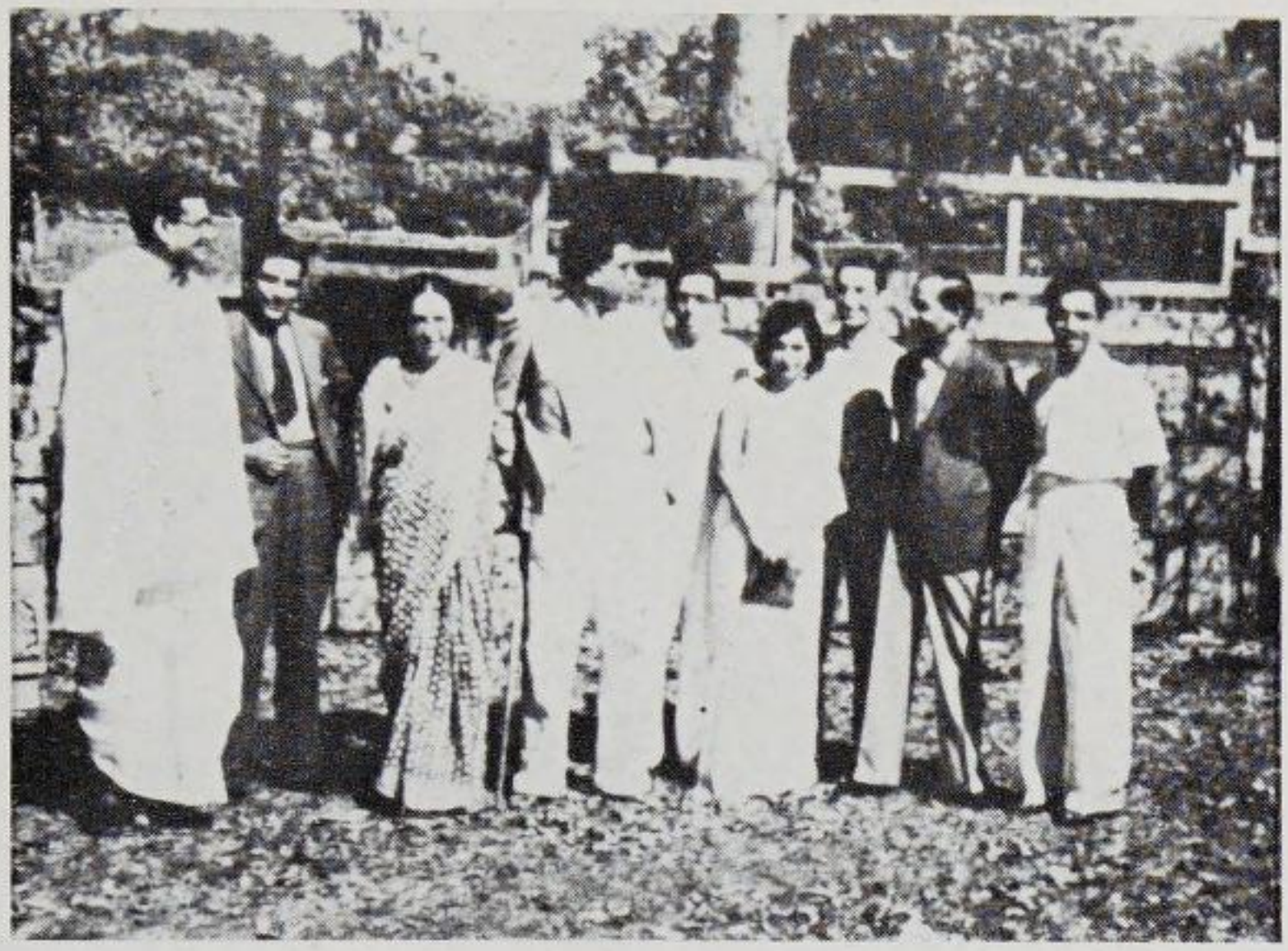


Roy and Deputy Police Commissioner Cowasji Pettigara (1931)

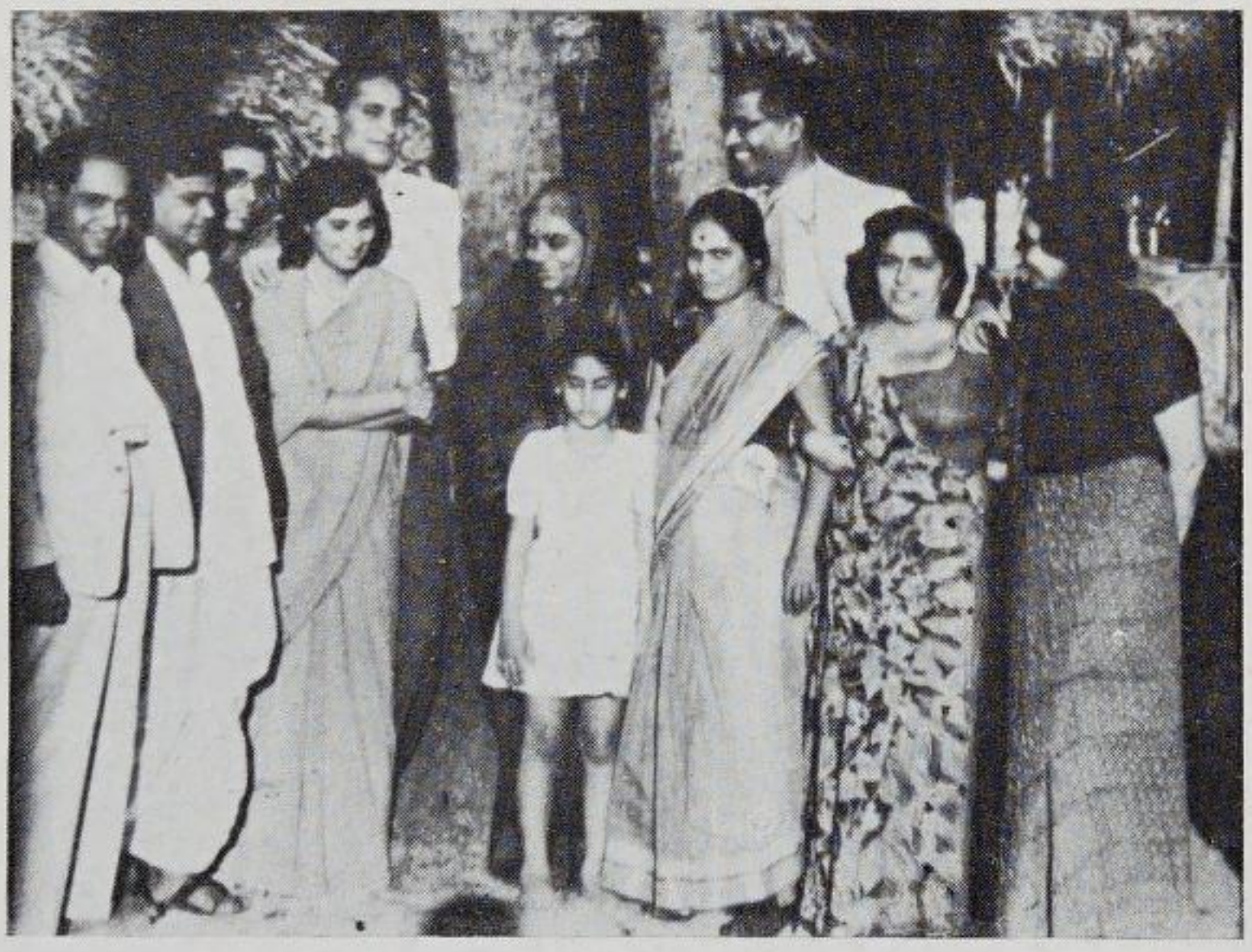
At C. J. Hall :
The Inaugural Conference
of the R.D.P. (1940)
Roy standing next
to Maniben Kara
(seated in the right),
Ellen Roy (seated)

Roy and Ellen with Haidee (1940)

Roy and Ellen (1940)

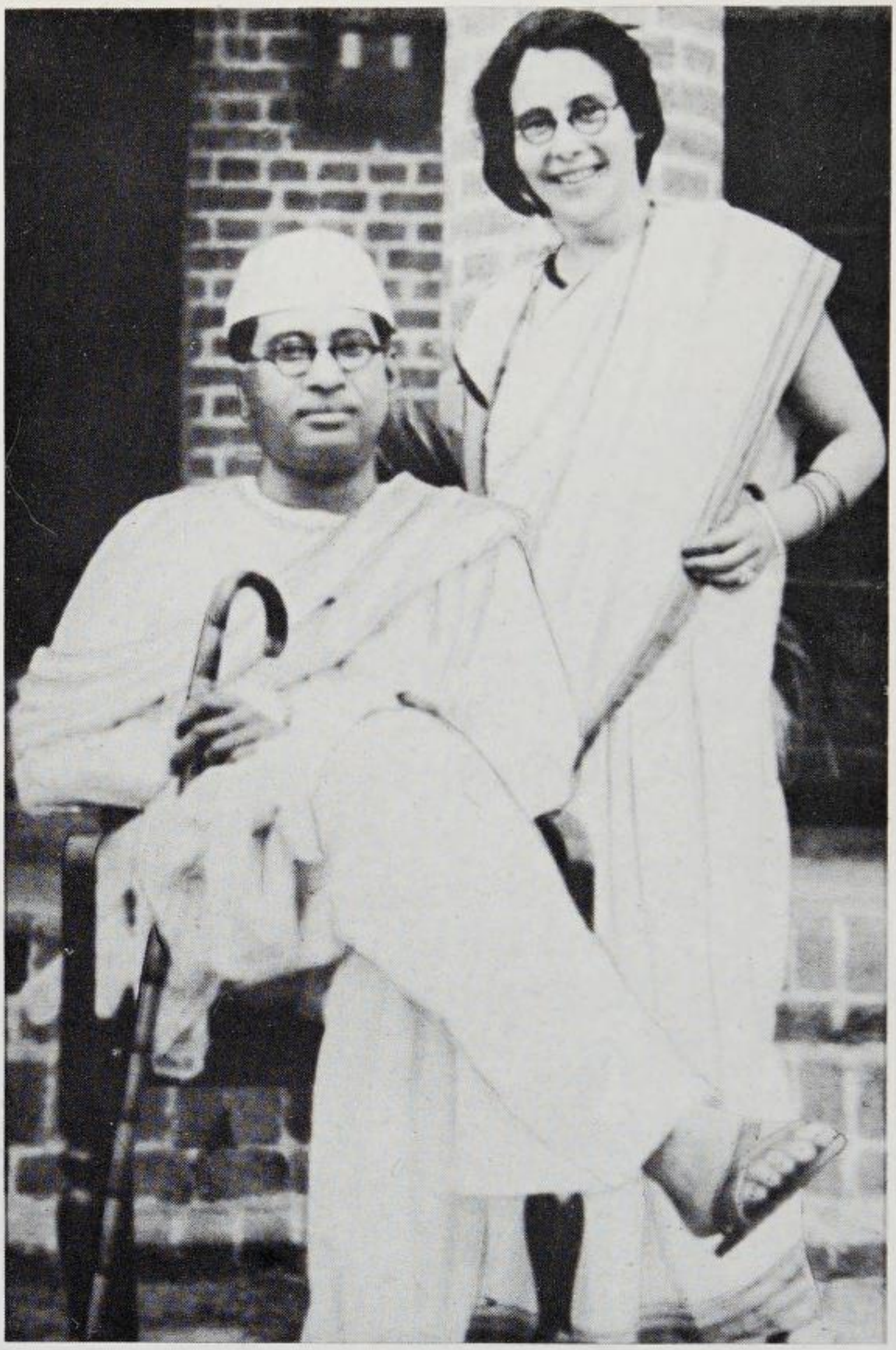


At Wadia Movietone.
From left to right :
Ellen and Roy with
the author and his wife (1940)

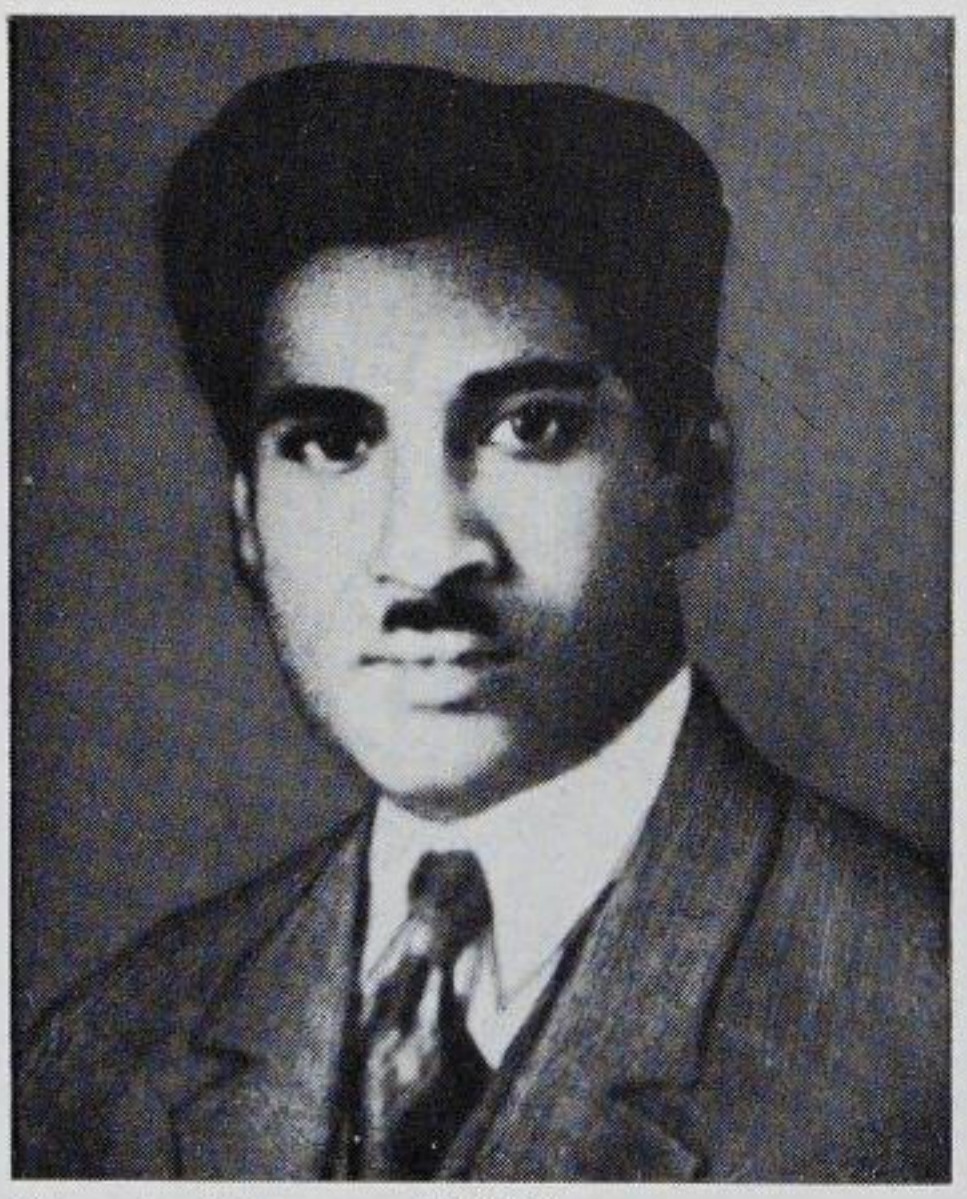


At the Juhu Shack
with Radical Democrats.

Roy and Royists at the R.D.P. Conference at Lucknow (1942)



Roy and Ellen at
Casa da Vinci



Roy in Moscow (1921)

Ellen in Germany (1929)

but not least Roy the humanist.

Even so, there has been a strange hiatus in all that has been written so far. No one seems to have cared to dwell on Roy the Man—a side which is no less an integral part of his personality than its other facets. I do not think that anyone can do full justice to the stuff that Roy was made of if he has not had an insight into what I had first termed as "Royana" some twenty years ago. Although it is possible to glean out what Roy the Man was from his writings it is only from his *Letters From Jail* to Ellen Gottschalk in Europe (to which I have referred repeatedly in the book) and to a lesser extent his "Memoirs of a Cat", that we can best assess his innermost feelings. Even his own "Memoirs" is not of much help. Because nowhere do we find him narrating his experiences from a frankly subjective point of view.

Roy had a unique band of Royists—a bounty for which even the gods, whatever they be, must have envied him. Nevertheless there has not been a Boswell among them, not even a Mahadeo Desai or Pyarelal. Perhaps the default has been a natural consequence of the teachings of Roy himself.

As a rationalist he was opposed to fostering the cult of hero worship. How often must I have heard him comment on the term "Royist". He was not happy about its use and maintained that he alone would be a true Royist who could go ahead of Roy in his thoughts and actions. I still remember the tribute he once paid to Tarkateerth Laxman Shastri Joshi at the Marwari Vidyalaya Hall when Roy said that he appreciated Shastriji's bold statement that he was also a non-conformist and would not hesitate to question Roy himself. I remember how Roy had raised his voice and said: "Here is a pundit who carries on the glorious traditions of Kapila and Kanada. I feel like bowing down before him . . .".

I had the good fortune to come in direct contact with Roy and Ellen during their annual visits to Bombay when they stayed with my wife and me at Casa da Vinci, our nest on Worli Sea Face. Unfortunately I had not maintained a diary. Hence I can cite only such few instances of the man as come to my mind today. Needless to say I could not have observed a chronological order in my narration.

M. N. Roy as I knew him was a family man in the best sense

of the term—a man who deeply loved his colleagues, shared his pleasures with them and theirs with his, always interested in their welfare as if he was their *paterfamilias.* But he did not prefer to speak effusively on the place of sentiment in one's life. In fact when it came to applying the test to himself he just slurred over it. Even so, it was possible for a discerning mind to see through his studied nonchalance. The latter was just a pose. Because, all said and done, Roy was a normal human being who cherished the finest values of a good life in his heart of hearts—a humanist par excellence.

Although Roy had convictions of his own, he always kept an open mind and also had a world of confidence in himself. During discussion he allowed full freedom to his comrades to dissent from his point of view. Why, he often invited it. He would then expound his thesis at length and analyse the pros and cons with an avalanche of facts and figures. It was only at the end that a decision was made on a consensus. His "Twenty Two Theses" of Radical Humanism, for example. Roy's first draft was composed of about eighteen theses only. It was after exciting, exhaustive discussions with Philip Spratt, G. D. Parikh, V. M. Tarkunde, C. R. Dalvi, Tarkateerth Laxman Shastri Joshi and others that he added four more theses incorporating the ideas of his colleagues in them.

It was a treat for me to be present on such occasions. In my imagination I would conjure up the vision of the Greek way of life—philosophers and teachers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle sitting in the shade of myrtle trees and grape vines in their academics with their disciples around them. The latter would face the onrush of logic and dialectic absorbing the message of new thoughts and acquiring newer knowledge. Nearer home, it would be the glory that was Nalanda. Yes, it was Roy's dream to create a modern Nalanda which later on became a partial reality when he founded the Indian Renaissance Institute at 13, Mohini Road, Dehra Dun. In the words of Vatsayan who was often there with the Roys, it had become "a place for pilgrimage, learning and inspiration". If Gurudev Tagore was the artistic conscience of India and Mahatma Gandhi her moral conscience M. N. Roy was indeed the intellectual conscience of India.

Roy was a teacher who never stopped being a student.

Although he had a towering intellect and compulsive personality he also had the virtue of comprehension to identify himself with his comrades in such a manner that there never was a barrier between them. Indeed, in Roy's assemblies: *Na Koi Banda Tha, Na Koi Banda Nawaz.*

In his article on Jatin Mukherji, Roy has described him as "a good man" and adds: "I have still to find a better". This description applies to Roy as truly as his early colleague and hero. It is the goodness of Roy the Man which pervades over all his intellectual and spiritual attainments. No higher tribute can be paid to any genius. ■ ■ ■

2. *Roy and Royists at Casa da Vinci*

Whenever Roy and Ellen were with us at Casa da Vinci the Royists would gather together almost every evening after their customary engagements in the city at lectures and meetings. Many meetings were also held at the Casa and many memorable decisions were taken there. Then we would all adjourn for dinner and drinks. Drinks, of course, preceded dinner and were followed by appetisers at dinner table and wines and liquers after it. Had an honest Congressman been a witness to our revelry, he would have been shocked at the "orgy". The parties generally lasted till the witching hour of the night and sometimes even the small hours of the morning.

When Roy joined the Congress he did wear khaddar. But he had never made a secret of his love for alcohol. Everyone knew that Roy cherished good wine and it was one of the reasons for his unpopularity in that organisation. And then, everyone knew that many of the staunchest Congressmen were also used to drinking, albeit in private. But hypocrisy was one vice from which Roy had always kept away. He was a firm believer in open society and had no inhibitions. In this respect, at least, which was the more honest group in the Congress, Royists or others? Need I emulate the Jesting Pilate, put the question and not wait for the answer . . . ?

The lighter side of life was an integral part of his personality. Since he had the unique good fortune to have come in contact

with the finest of intellectuals, revolutionaries and politicians all over the world his repertoire was inexhaustible. A veritable cascade of rainbow coloured words and phrases would fall from his lips as he narrated humorous but nonetheless humane anecdotes to regale and enlighten us all. Certainly he had a radiant personality and the gift of transforming the banal into the lively, if not poetic. Roy's sense of humour never failed him. During his last days he was in coma. When he came out of it for a while he looked about and saw that he had been kept on glucose, saline and oxygen. He smiled and quipped: "Anything God makes technology improves upon".

In spite of his frail health, the main reason for which was his incarceration for six years, Roy harboured an amazing fund of energy. He would keep awake till late in the night and it was Ellen's persuasive bidding, sometimes lovingly threatening, that would induce him to retire. But the very next morning by nine o'clock or so the Roys would be again at their desk attending diligently to their day's work as fresh as ever. Roy would dictate his articles to Ellen who typed them out with the speed of a professional stenographer. Roy's numerous extempore speeches have survived in print only because Ellen used to jot down her notes in shorthand like a devoted secretary.

Ellen was equally well versed in world politics and an intellectual in her own right. Her several articles and few books reveal the lucidity of her thoughts unmistakably. And yet she used to describe herself as a manual worker taking a back seat to Roy's. In this respect Ellen was certainly a typical Indian woman traditionally inclined to play a subordinate role to that of her husband.

How I wish I had kept a diary! Because today I have forgotten so many of Roy's anecdotes based on his adventurous experiences—a veritable golden treasury of "Royana" which now is lost to posterity for good. So it seems to me at least, unless some others who go through the contents of this book feel inspired to record their own experiences. ■ ■ ■

3. Roy the Gourmet

Roy was a gourmet in the best sense of the word. There are passages in *Letters From Jail* in which he reflects on what he is missing. He tells Ellen: "How delightful it would be to see a bottle of '21 Rhine buried in a shining bucket of ice; or even a krug of Meunchener in Wilhelmshallen". In another letter he says: "It is unfair to be mortifying with the flesh with coarse woollen texture and not have a Benedictine and Chartreuse Verti to drink as the jolly old monks used to".

Elsewhere he shows his concern for Ellen's plight in Paris: "I hope you were not required to live a saintly life in Pavillion Sainte Therese! I suppose it was not too far from Bordeaux to have plenty of good wine; and the bouncing Basques are proverbially jolly".

In another letter he refers to Eduard Fuch who wrote many books on the cultural history of Europe and advises Ellen to stay with him: "The old Sybarite has a good cellar full. You know his theory about Marx, Mehring and Thalheimer. They all knew the taste of good wine and hence their intellectual greatness".

Referring to his friend Sneevliet whom he had admired greatly, he advises Ellen to stay with him for rest and adds that Mrs. Sneevliet "would stuff you with good Dutch grub. It is splendid, you know. In my opinion the combination of French fineness and German solidarity".

It was not in fulsome praise that some of Roy's friends called him "more European than the Europeans". In fact, Roy was more than an European. He was a cosmopolite—the universal man who believed in living a full life.

Whenever the Roys were with us at Casa da Vinci, Hilla and I would display the choicest of wines—Rhine Wine, White and Black, Sauterne, Medoc, Lachryma Christi, Benedictine, even the rare Trappist wine—which were then available in the city. Alas! It is no more so. Roy would tell us how they were prepared and which year's product was considered the best. He relished good wine as an aesthete and had an infinite capacity to digest it. Had Roy found time he might have written an authentic book on the history of the wine industry in Europe

and described the process of their brewing and maturing like a professional.

The Royists would remember with affection the cocktail Roy used to prepare for them in Dehra Dun. We called it "Roy's Cocktail" after the fashion of European blenders of repute whose names are associated with their respective recipes. I have described it elsewhere in this book. Suffice it to say here that just to refresh the memory and palate of our friends we would sometimes ask him to prepare it for a change. It was a treat to watch him at his expertise as he blended the wines with flourishes which would have been the envy of many a "patrons" in Europe.

In those days we had a wonderful cook at the Casa, Caillu by name. He used to read books on the culinary art and prepare tempting and imaginative dishes. Sometimes Roy would go in the kitchen and modestly suggest preparing an omlette or beef steak in a particular manner. Caillu who did not brook interference from others would welcome him enthusiastically and then tell us that only Roy Sahib knew how to enjoy good food.

Since Roy had been to China, sometimes we took him and Ellen to Chinese restaurants in the Fort or Colaba area of Bombay so as to treat him with "real" Chinese food and Roy would order the menu himself.

Once I asked him: "Well Roy what do you think of the Chinese food in the city?"

He replied: "You can see that I enjoy every bit of it".

And then after a slight hesitation added: "Only it is not indigenously Chinese".

And then he narrated to us how the Chinese prepared their food and with what grace they served it to their guests. All this came as a revelation to us. If for nothing else, I wished I could have gone to Canton or Peking just to experience the real Chinese food and Chinese courtesy.

In fact, Roy was already a "patron" in the early years of his adventurous life in Calcutta. With a view to avoiding the vigilant eye of the police he had devised a plan to run an "innocent" restaurant there to earn his livelihood. But behind the facade, Roy's shop had provided a safe venue for his revolutionary colleagues to meet clandestinely and discuss their ac-

tivities.

When Roy came out of Jail and joined the Indian National Congress he was virtually penniless. During their first two visits the Roys stayed with V. B. Karnik and his wife Vimlabai in their modest apartment. Since they could not afford the luxury of engaging a cook the Roys prepared their food on a Primus stove. Karnik has mentioned to me that neither Roy nor Ellen evèr complained about their discomforts and that Roy especially used to derive fun out of the inconveniences he had to face. The foursome would share their frugal meals and Roy would reminisce over his culinary experiences in Europe when he was in hiding or ever on his toes, shifting from one place to another.

Nirmala Karnik has told me of the pomfrets someone had once brought for the Roys in Dehra Dun. Instead of hurrying to the kitchen this time Roy said: "No, Ellen, we will not fry the pomfrets today. Do you remember how Vimlabai (V. B. Karnik's wife) had once served us with pomfrets prepared in right royal Maharashtrian fashion in Bombay? The taste still lingers but I do not know the recipe. So let us ask Nirmala to prepare them for us".

So Nirmala carried out her task with pleasure. Needless to say, when the dish was on the dining table Roy relished it with uninhibited glee.

The monetary situation of Roy was not so happy till the end of the global war. A major part of their small earnings and donations from friends had to be spent in keeping the Radical Democratic Party alive and functioning. Many a time Roy and Ellen subsisted on frugal meals without making a show of it. If any political leader in India could be said to have lived from day to day it was M. N. Roy.

Even so, when the Royists happened to assemble in Dehra Dun (always bearing their travelling expenses themselves) to attend meetings and seminars, Ellen and Roy looked after their comforts joyously and emptying their meagre coffers liberally.

But the situation improved after the dissolution of the party; comparatively speaking, of course.

The cuisine was in charge of the Roys, as always. Both attended to the cooking. But when Roy was occupied with his

comrades or friends, it was Ellen who would be in the kitchen. Roy was known to leave his group suddenly so that he would be in the kitchen with Ellen and join them again soon.

Roy was an adept in preparing French, Russian, Mexican and Spanish dishes not to mention Bengali varieties. He frankly enjoyed displaying his preparations to his guests and commenting on them. Sometimes Roy used to prepare particular types of soup for Stalin who is reported to have relished them immensely. ■ ■ ■

4. Roy and his "spiritual heirs"

Gandhiji had finally selected Jawaharlal Nehru as his "spiritual heir" in preference to other senior Congress leaders like C. Rajagopalachari and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

One evening when Royists had assembled at Casa da Vinci someone referred to the Mahatma's momentous decision and we began discussing it. Roy had approved the choice despite the differences between him and Nehru. After all, was not Nehru "the only civilised Westerner in the Congress fold" in his eyes?

Then someone asked him suddenly as to whom he considered as his "spiritual heir".

Roy's first reaction was a hearty laugh and then he said: "There is no need for me to select anyone. Why, all my comrades are my spiritual heirs".

But we persisted in our query. Someone said: "But suppose, Comrade Roy, the choice is forced on you whom would you name as your successor?"

Roy entered in the spirit of the game and after some thought said: "I do not think I can single out just one name and I do not mean to denigrate any of our leading comrades. Even so I will try to name a few".

And then he mentioned six stalwart Royists as his spiritual heirs. If I remember aright the list was composed of K. K. Sinha, Ram Singh, V. B. Karnik, V. M. Tarkunde, A. K. Mukerjee and the youngest of them all, G. D. Parikh.

Here I remember that Roy was not happy to be called a "Leader". He used to say that the term raised before him the

spectre of Hitler who was popularly addressed as "our leader" by the Germans and he would humorously add: "I dread the very idea of appropriating the nomenclature of that arch fascist". ■ ■ ■

5. *Roy and the first edition of New Humanism*

Roy knew that facts are stubborn creatures. They must be faced bravely and squarely even when they go against one's grain. Because truth must be served at all cost.

Hence Roy never hesitated to own up his slant on a given issue when he realised that it had become obsolete and unserviceable in the cause he believed in. That is why he abjured communism still retaining his faith in Marxism as a living philosophy. But when he found that Marxist philosophy had also become outdated in many respects, he went beyond it and formulated his thesis of New Humanism. Because of his nonconformism Roy became the most controversial figure of modern India, nay, of his times. Even when Roy was a Marxist he did not accept everything which that iconoclast had written. Because Roy himself was nonetheless iconoclastic. The postulate of Marxist philosophy was that Being precedes Consciousness. But Roy differed and said it is Consciousness which was determined by our Being. In this respect it may be said that if Marx put Hegel on his head in his analysis of Historical Determinism, it was Roy who put Marx on his head vis-a-vis the polemic of Being and Consciousness. When the communists placed Marx on a pedestal as if he was a demi-god Roy deplored the new cult and said: "Even Marxism has been transformed into a sort of religion".

I had the privilege of publishing the first edition of "New Humanism" as a J. B. H. Wadia Publication. It was released on August 15, 1947, our first Independence Day which was also Ellen's birthday. It was also called "The Humanist Manifesto".

Later on the Roys were with us at the Casa during their annual descent in winter from the fringe of the Himalayas to the plains of the Western Ghats.

I remember one evening when the book was being discussed by the coterie present over our customary drinks, I proposed a toast and said: "To the end of the century of the Communist Manifesto. And the beginning of the century of the Humanist Manifesto".

Roy appreciated my sentiment but he also hastened to place my rhetoric in its proper perspective. He differentiated between the communist politics and the humanist philosophy of Marx. He said that the former was likely to die out sooner or later but so far as the latter was concerned even if many of its tenets may have been found wanting in the light of historical development, there were still abiding values in it.

And then he began to expound the philosophical contents of Marx's writings tracing them not only to Hegel but also Vico who had preceded the great philosopher of the Absolute who had availed of certain ideas of Vico.

Roy was ever in quest of truth and when he struck upon it he did not hesitate to correct himself. That is why he changed the name of his philosophical journal from *The Marxian Way* to *The Humanist Way.*

No wonder that Roy was the most easily misunderstood and the most sinisterly maligned man of his times. The root of it lay in the non-conformism of the man of diamond-cut honesty of thought. ■ ■ ■

6. Roy—Christmas and New Year

Every time we celebrated Christmas and New Year Eve at the Casa, Roy participated in a right royal fashion. He put aside all high falutin' talk on politics, philosophy etc. and throughout the night identified himself with the spirit of the festivity.

Even so when the church bells in the vicinity heralded Christmas at the stroke of midnight, Roy felt reminded of the "Kremlin Bells". It seemed he missed them. But he would soon come out of his reverie.

When the New Year was about to usher in, our coterie would form the customary ring and dance and sing "Auld Lang Sein"

with Roy and Ellen bouncing with us all in gay abandon.

Roy the rationalist and atheist had a breath of vision and catholicity of approach to human problems which made him distinguish between the compulsive and the unessential in life. He knew that the Christian message of "Peace on Earth and Goodwill to Mankind" transcended its narrowly religious connotations and "sanctified superstitions" as he once wrote. And he preferred not to make a show of his own predilections at such an inopportune moment when human beings were indulging in "joy abounding"—be it for the time being and for whatever reason. Certainly Roy believed in spreading happiness at every opportunity which came his way.

Roy had the enviable gift of remaining optimistic under most trying circumstances. He accepted reverses as so many challenges. Although averse to indulging in quotations in conversation, he would come out with them on rare occasions. In one of his "Letters" he quotes Montaigne: "Pleasant thoughts are the salt of the earth". Elsewhere he tells Ellen: "I am an incorrigible optimist and I do laugh although not as I used to". Even when he felt uncomfortable in jail and perspired due to excessive heat he makes light of his plight and writes: "To picture my condition, I can only remind you of Dante lying in the Inferno *contemptuous* (italics mine) of the fires of hell".

Somewhere he cheers up Ellen by saying in Miltonic vein "Father Time—him we shall conquer". In another place he wants Ellen to transport him "in imagination when we did nothing but laugh".

Certainly Roy had an infinite capacity to find joy in life at the slightest opportunity that came his way. He believed that "Life's for living". ■ ■ ■

7. Roy and the episode of the beef steak

Once when Roy was in Germany (Berlin, if I remember rightly) he had invited an Indian nationalist to dinner and drinks. Whereas his friend was fond of drinks and meat, he had an aversion to beef. This was not unusual in an orthodox Indian believing in the injunctions of the neo-Aryan culture. But Roy

was unaware of it all. So when the gentleman appreciated the beef steak and gourmondised it avidly, Roy, trying to play the perfect host, called the waiter and spoke to him in German to bring a second helping.

Then as he was enjoying the repeat performance Roy said: "Do you know, this restaurant is justly famous in Berlin for preparing the finest of beef-steaks?"

Suddenly the good man dropped his knife and fork, went pale in the face and said: "O Bhagwan! What have I done! I have eaten cow's flesh!" Roy told us that he too was dumbfounded. He said: "But how was I to know that when he relished all kinds of meat and all variety of wines and whisky, he was averse to eating beef?"

"I have committed a heinous sin" continued his guest. "How shall I ever go to Swarga? My spirit will now rot in Narka".

Roy then told us: "Fortunately, a brilliant idea came to me and I said: 'But our Shastras have enjoined that we should not eat the flesh of Indian cows and what you have eaten is the flesh of a foreign cow' ". This argument (Roy continued) pacified his friend who said: "O, then I am still not beyond redemption".

"Certainly not" Roy answered "even if you had committed a sin in ignorance it would have been condoned by the gods themselves".

We all laughed heartily at this anecdote. But Roy said: "Wait, wait. You have not heard the full story. The beef-steak had proved so tempting to my friend that as a confirmed anti-foreign nationalist he did full justice to the second helping also".

Someone said: "But it was not fair to deceive him".

Roy replied: "Well, if my interpretation had helped him to regain his peace of mind, what right did I have to deprive him of it?"

This attitude was typical of Roy's liberal approach to all simple and complex problems of life. Although he was a rationalist, he never ignored the need of an individual to adhere to his religious beliefs if they were the only avenue open to him for psychological escape. He was wont to saying: " Who am I to deprive a man of his crutches if he cannot walk without

them? I have no right to ask him to throw them away if I cannot make him walk without them".

That is why he always maintained that a philosophical revolution is the condition precedent to social revolution. ■ ■ ■

8. Roy and his Parsee host

The Beef Steak Episode reminds me of one of Roy's experiences which he narrated to Hilla and me.

Once when Roy and Ellen were invited by a Parsee friend, the latter placed before him a dish of typical Parsee snack. It was what we call "Patrel" similar to the "Patra" of the Hindus. Roy said: "When I saw it first I was intrigued. It appeared like so many vicious things, black in colour and coiled like the cobra in a street madari's basket. I took just a bite to please my host. But he said that it was a special 'delicacy' prepared in my honour and that I must have more of it. And so I did".

"But Roy", Hilla interposed, "it was not that necessary for you to eat what you did not relish. There must have been other things to suit your palate".

"O yes, there were", he replied, "but if I had refused I would have embarrassed my host and deprived him of his enjoyment." And so saying he laughed outright. But the laughter was not meant to be a slur on his host's impetuosity. It was directed at his erstwhile discomfiture from which he had derived fun at his own expense.

In her moving article on Roy written after his death and published in the March 4 issue of *Radical Humanist* Weekly (1954) Ellen has referred to Roy's eagerness to please his friends and stated that Roy would not hurt the feelings of his host but cheerfully ate whatever was offered to him even when he knew that it was likely to cause him gastric discomfort. ■ ■ ■

9. Roy and his Parsee friend

During the Second World War years the long nurtured hatred of the British had become all the more pronounced under the constant propaganda of the leaders of the Indian National Congress. Big business was also on its side and industrialists and capitalists swelled the Congress treasury with their liberal donations, unmindful of the contradiction between their principles and practice.

Even so there were some persons in the business community who were confirmed anti-fascists and given proof of their fervour to save India and the world for democracy. Some of them had come in contact with Roy and approved of the genuinely democratic aims and objects of the Radical Democratic Party of India.

Among them was a young dynamic Parsee who had made good in his business. He had helped our party with generous donations made openly by cheques. Sometimes he would be with us at the Casa for dinner and drinks. Our good friend was a typical Parsee—loquacious, humorous and prone to repeating the story of his success and his extraordinary encounters with some "big guns" whom he had "floored" in personal and fantastic confrontations.

Our coterie would listen to his spirited monologues enjoyingly and sympathetically. Roy would be the first to laugh with him every time he repeated his storyettes. He had the capacity to draw honest fun out of life's trivialities. And then it seemed as if he was rather a school-going boy and not the giant of an intellectual that he was. I could not but silently marvel at his spontaneity—silently because I knew that he would feel embarrassed if I were to dilate on it openly.

After our good friend had left we would indulge in "post mortem" in the lighter vein and then Roy would comment with a twinkle in his eyes: "And they say we do not suffer for the cause . . ." This was with reference to the attack on Roy by Congressmen and Communists who scandalised him for avoiding going to jail by siding with the British Indian Government waging war against Fascist aggression.

Decency demands that our good friend should remain

anonymous—more so as he is no more. His rise had been sudden like a meteor. The trail had blazed brilliantly for a time and then disappeared in the void. But even in later years when he was passing through lean times Roy would enquire of him and once actually went to his new small office to pay his respects.

Roy never forgot the slightest act of grace of any one in the cause he espoused. ■ ■ ■

10. Roy at Juhu shack

My brother Homi owns a shack at Juhu. He and his wife Mary (the one and only "Fearless Nadia" of Wadia Movietone's Diamond Thrillers) invited us sometimes to dinner, dance and drinks. The Royists coterie would also be with us. Leaving their political worries behind them, the Roys would mingle with us in our festive pranks. Ellen would join the group on the dance floor. But I do not remember Roy ever having done so. Homi was wont to organising naive games for the enjoyment of children and youngsters such as Musical Chairs, Blowing the Bubble, Dumb Charade, Housie Housie, French Cricket, etc. The elders also would participate and Roy used to be among the first batch.

It was always a delight to watch him participating whole-heartedly in the fun with the enthusiasm of a teenager. On such occasions we never broke up before midnight. While returning home in our car, Ellen would suddenly burst into a song and Roy would intermittently give her accompaniment by humming the melody. ■ ■ ■

11. Roy and our children

Haidee. My daughter Haidee was then a child. It was a delight for Hilla and me to see Roy play with her, whenever he found time. She would pop into his study room when he was busy at his desk. Hilla would ask Haidee to come away and Roy would often say: "Don't you bother, Hilla. The little one is

not disturbing me".

As Roy dictated and Ellen typed Haidee would watch the process with curiosity and he would occasionally play with her hair. We have treasured a still photo of Haidee standing close between Roy and Ellen.

Vinci. Once our son Vinci aged 10 years was hovering between life and death as a result of concussion in the brain while playing cricket. When Roy came to know of it in Dehra Dun he immediately posted a hand-written letter to Hilla and me. It related to his and Ellen's concern for Vinci's health. Sentence after sentence in that letter revealed his affection for the Wadias as also his genuine anxiety about our son. Ellen also wrote a separate letter couched in similar sentiments.

When I informed him that Vinci had come out of the crisis, he wrote another letter almost immediately stating what a big relief it was for Ellen and him to receive the glad tidings.

I do not remember Roy becoming sentimental in the presence of his comrades and friends. But I am sure that whenever any one of them happened to pass through a crisis—domestic or otherwise—Roy must have written similar letters to others as he did in our case. I think it was not *that* necessary for him to have remained reserved. I wonder if Roy who was also interested in the study of Behaviourism ever tried to analyse his own behaviour.

Be that as it may, Roy the Man was as great as, if not greater than, Roy the intellectual and revolutionary.

Roy Junior. When our first grand-son was born in 1962, the family took a natural interest in finding a suitable name for him. The problem was solved when we all agreed to call him Roy. He was one of the first few to go through my manuscript. I asked him what he thought of it. After saying that it was a sincere tribute to Comrade Roy he hesitated with a "But. . . but. . . ". "But what?" I queried and he said: "I wish you could add a word for me that it was after him that I was named".

I agreed readily. After all blood is thicker than water. But there is another reason for the inclusion of this paragraph in the book. Roy Jr. is there to carry on the tradition of sustaining the interest of the family in Royism and Radical Humanism. Given the fresh approach of the young generation

he will, perhaps, one day write a more illuminating book on M. N. Roy, *Insha Allah!* ■ ■ ■

12. Roy—Cricket and Chess

Once we were discussing a cricket test match and asked Roy if he was interested in the game. He said: "Well, I have tried to be interested in cricket which is called the King of Sports. But I must admit I have failed miserably. You go to the stadium to watch a cricket match. You wait for minutes and minutes and then suddenly the crowd roars and claps at a boundary stroke or the fall of a wicket. Then again it goes into stupor. I would prefer to watch a baseball game which is full of life and activity every minute. At least it gets over in an hour or so".

Then I said: "But you must be interested in some game, say chess".

"Oh yes, I like chess".

Hilla interposed: "Then some day you must play a game of chess with Jamshed. He was a star player in his college days".

"Were you?" Roy asked with a twinkle in his eyes the significance of which I missed then. But I did not miss the opportunity to show off and replied: "Well, once I had just come up to the finals in our college tournament".

Then I asked Roy: "With whom did you play chess in Moscow?"

Roy looked at Ellen and she said: "Why, it was Alekhine".

"Yes, yes it was Alekhine. The game had lasted for more than two hours and then I had to leave it undecided to attend a meeting".

My face had fallen completely. Alekhine was the world champion and his name had become legendary after Capablanca's. After this incident I never used one of my cliches "on the chessboard of politics" in his presence. Why, I did not even utter the word "chess" and Roy very generously refrained from reminding me to play the game with him.

When Roy felt like having respite from the routine of writing he played music or read a detective novel or played chess. I knew that Ellen was extremely well versed in literature and

music. But it was only in the 1950s that I came to know that she was also an adept in the game of chess. The Roys never found time to play chess at Casa da Vinci; and I did not have opportunity to see them at it at 13 Mohini Road during my few brief stays there. But they did play chess now and then. Was it that they deliberately avoided it so as not to embarrass me? Be that as it may, one cannot but be curious to know how often Ellen had managed to keep Roy at bay with her moves on the chessboard or if ever she had checkmated her life mate. ■ ■ ■

13. Roy and entertainment

It may come as a surprise to many that Roy, no less than Ellen, enjoyed, all kinds of entertainment—musical concerts, stage plays, ballets and films. He is nostalgic about them in his *Letters from Jail*. Opportunity permitting, he used to dilate on them even in the midst of serious talks with the Royists—how he had met Marlene Dietrich in Berlin before she migrated to the U.S.A; how he had witnessed a dance performance of the great Isadora Duncan in Moscow gliding from one wing of the stage to the other; how thrilled he had been to see the one and only Anna Pavlova in her famous "Dying Swan" number; how Paul Robeson's soulful voice had moved him in the Volga Boatman sequence. Such interludes must have been the envy of whatever sporting gods there be on Mount Olympus or the peaks of hoary Himalayas.

Roy had good opportunity to see films when he was in the U.S.A., Mexico, Paris and Berlin. During his stay in the U.S.S.R. he had seen practically all the early Russian classics of Einsentein, Pudovkin, Romm and others.

Whenever there was a good foreign film shown in Bombay, Hilla and I would prevail upon the Roys to find time for it. Once we were with them at Liberty Cinema to see an American film, the name of which I have fogotten. But when that great German actor Albert Basserman appeared on the screen both Roy and Ellen were excited and said rather loudly: "Why, this is our own Basserman!"

Returning home Roy became reminiscent and told us how

they had met the German Thespian in Berlin before he had opted to Hollywood as a refugee from the Nazi terror and had such a jolly good time in his company. ■ ■ ■

14. Roy and music

Both Roy and Ellen had a genuine love for classical Western music. They had shared the pleasure in many places when they were in Europe between 1928 and 1930. But whereas Ellen's knowledge of music was that of an academician, Roy's was that of a dilettante. In fact Ellen was a very good pianist in her early life.

In his "Letters' Roy becomes nostalgic about it now and then. In one letter he writes: "The remembrance of Paul Robeson makes me homesick". His "Steal Away" haunts me. I long for some grand music—Rimsky Korsakoff, for example, the overture of "Igor", Beethovan's "Symphonies". At another place he tells Ellen: "I crave for good music. The thing I remember most vividly about Paris is an evening in the Opera to hear 'Thais' (text of Anatole France). The overture depicting the suppressed, but tormenting passions of the fool who climbed up a pole was simply grand".

It needs to be recorded here that Roy did not relish the grand music of Tchaikovsky and considered La Dame Pique as "silly and artificial". Strange antipathy in one who liked classical music. I do not think Ellen shared his opinion.

When Ellen had informed that she had met Paul Robeson in Paris, he remembers how much he was moved to see him act in O'Neil's *Emperor Jones* in Berlin. He adds: "I would appreciate him as a great actor if he was not such a greater singer".

There was a churchyard nearby the District Jail in Dehra Dun. Roy refers to the funeral marches he heard often. Once when he listened to Mendelssohn he writes: "There is beauty even in death. It must be a pleasant sensation if the dying feels like hearing Mendelssohn's Funeral March. Which is the better, Handel's? I am no judge. Only I like and enjoy good music".

Had he been allowed "A" class prisoner's facilities he would certainly have asked for a gramophone and his favourite

opuses. In fact in one of his last letters he expresses his desire to buy a gramophone when he is released.

Whenever the Roys were with us at Casa da Vinci they would snatch time from their political routine and enjoy listening to their favourite compositions.

Fortunately we had a small but representative collection of gramophone records. Ellen would select and play them on our radiogram and both would listen to them in complete silence. Then Roy would reminisce over the circumstances in which he had first heard them in Europe, mainly in Berlin and Moscow.

I remember one such occasion vaguely after Ellen had played "The Volga Boatman", he had described his aesthetic pleasure listening to Paul Robeson on the Moscow stage in the company of a galaxy of communists of the day including Stalin.

I also remember once Ellen had written to Hilla to send her three or four records of Beethoven and Bach which were out of stock. We succeeded in securing them after some efforts and despatched them to Dehra Dun.

Roy had never asked us to play any disc when he was at his desk at Casa da Vinci. But there were many occasions in Dehra Dun when he would play the records even during discussions in an adjoining room. He would get up from his seat to change the records and return to his friends to resume.

As with so many others, this interplay of music seemed to inspire Roy to concentrate on his work all the more.

Here I am tempted to set the record aright. Although Roy had a natural liking for Bengali music, he did not evince any great interest in Indian classical music, especially on its vocal side. I took a devious satisfaction in having scored a point over him in this respect. ■ ■ ■

15. Roy and Literature

Although Roy did not find time to read poetry, at least after he returned to India, he seemed to know a lot about the great poets—English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Russian—quite a few of whom he had read in their respective

languages. Moreover his attachment to Bengali literature was natural; and he was quite conversant with its history and development.

In his *Letters from Jail* to Ellen Gottschalk in Europe (on which most of the contents of this chapter are based) he refers to Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's *Sesh Prashna* as a novel which can stand in comparison with novels like those of Anatole France, Ibsen and Zola. He considers it as "landmark in Indian Renaissance" and calls its heroine "Dionysian". Applying Marxist postulates which had influenced his thinking almost exclusively, he makes a rather odious comparison and opines *Sesh Prashna* as "better than Gitanjali".

He considered Sudhin Datta's Miltonic poem in English on anti-fascism as the very best among those he had come across in India. Whenever Sudinda came to Dehra Dun and stayed with the Roys, Roy would quickly dispose of his desk work and spend time in discussing not only philosophy and physics but also English and Bengali literature with him. Sudhinda wondered how Roy could find time for literature in the midst of his all-demanding political work and self-imposed study in philosophy and science.

In her article on Sudhin Datta in the *Radical Humanist* Weekly of August 20, 1960 Ellen says that the idea of "The Marxian Way" journal was conceived jointly by Sudhinda and Roy "as an organised forum for this intellectual intercourse on a wider plane". She tells us how both of them would be engrossed in their talk "till the small hours of the morning on thermodynamics, artefacts or the sanctions of a secular ethics". How they would jump up from their seats in sheer restlessness "walking about and talking and suddenly laughing in the exhilaration of a new idea, an agreed formulation, a fresh insight". In which other Indian politicians, except Nehru, can we find such catholic interest in science and humanities? Roy wanted to establish the relationship between ethics and aesthetics but never found time to concentrate on this exciting idea of his.

Roy seemed to have read Gurudev Tagore inside out in English and Bengali and tells Ellen: "Tagore's books are all translated except the best ones in Bengali before he became famous." In consonance with his rationalist outlook he did not

take fancy for Tagore preaching "in a mystical, prophetic language which none could really understand." In the last phase of his life when he became a full-fledged Radical Humanist, he seemed to have modified his opinion about Tagore and placing his metaphysics in the perspective of Indian History.

In another letter Roy expresses his surprise to find that a novel like Michael Arlen's *Green Hat* should find readers in a country which appears "to detest Western materialism". He was soon going to find out for himself that Indians were, by and large, more "materialistic" in their daily life despite their loudly-trumpetted "spirituality" to the world.

He considered Arthur Koestler's *Darkness At Noon* as the novel par excellence of its time. When Koestler was in Bombay he had visited Roy at the Casa. I faintly remember both reminiscing over their contact abroad; and Koestler who had come to be with Roy and Ellen for a short while, only in view of his brief halt in Bombay, had stayed with us for dinner and drinks and left at midnight rather reluctantly.

John Galsworthy and Thomas Hardy were Roy's favourite novelists. He used to refer to them in conversation, occasion permitting; and he had even read Hardy's epic "The Dynasts". In one of his letters Roy tells Ellen: "But I am unregenerate. Hardy and even Galsworthy can tell me more about the anatomy, physiology and pathology of the Victorian, Edwardian and Georgian society than the ultra-Freudians, brazen behaviourists and neo-romantic mystics, passing as realists, even revolutionaries".

In another letter he makes a poignant observation: "English detest everything 'foreign'. Do you remember Soames Forsythe's remark after seeing 'Carmen'? He was too much of a connoisseur not to be impressed by music; but he did not feel quite happy because 'that girl was so foreign' ".

Elsewhere he informs Ellen he was reading *The Swan Song* for the fifth time in jail.

Somewhere he also refers to Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea.* Among the moderns Roy's favourite authors were Sinclair Lewis and Pearl Buck.

Similarly he had gone through *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* again and again. He adds: "A Classic like

Gibbon cannot be read too often".

For him Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* was a "raw production". But he is also objective enough to say that it had "some good and beautiful parts"; and he considered the war chapters as "better than Remarque" (referring, of course, to *All Quiet On The Western Front*).

But Roy's interest in literature was catholic. He was also fond of reading detective novels. Van Dyne's Philo Vance was his favourite detective. "I can always find time to read detective novels" he tells Ellen. Even when he finds the lot of novels mediocre, nevertheless he welcomes them as a desirable change from "highbrow stuff" like *Anthony Adverse* which he was then reading.

The treatment which he received as a second class political prisoner told on his nerves sometimes. He tells Ellen: "I am finding it difficult to live up to my philosophy. I am tired of the world". But he had also the will to live and the strength to endure physical discomfort and mental perturbation. Only way he could do so was to occupy himself with detective fiction and lighter reading. Otherwise his interest in literature was certainly broad based.

When Ellen was waiting patiently in Europe to be with him in India on his release from jail, Roy finds opportunity to remember his Homer. He writes: "We cannot get around the fact, that of space and time which is almost certain to treat us cruelly, heaven knows how long! In plain language, I am opposed to what I want most. It is not a cheerful prospect to play Penelope" and adds: "a year or two might be alright to play the dutiful wife, provided that you are given the opportunity to outdo the Hindu wife. Only don't burn yourself for heaven's sake."

I also faintly remember that occasion permitting, whenever I referred to the English poets—Elizabethan, Restoration and the 19th century Romanticists—Roy had always something relevant to say about them.

I would, of course, go into rapture over Keats but he preferred Shelley and Byron for obvious reasons.

In a letter dated April 22, 1936 Roy observes: "Literature differs from other branches of art—painting and sculpture, for example—in that it must have a content as well a form.

Therefore good poetry is such a very rare thing".

Sudhinda's query has remained an unsolved mystery. When did Roy find time to be so conversant with such a mass of world literature? Well, it was one of Roy's secrets.

Somewhere in the letters Roy says "Jail is not a university". But he had nonetheless made it his university. ■ ■ ■

16. Roy and his memoirs

We had often asked Roy to reduce his experiences to the written word. He had resisted saying that it was always dangerous to be autobiographical. The author was bound to portray himself in glowing terms and make a hero of himself. He describes this admirably in the preface to his *Memoirs of a Cat*. But he yielded at long last and began to write his memoirs. Only the first volume could see the light of the day when death snatched him away from us.

In his memoirs Roy does not even once refer to Evelyn Trent his first wife who was throughout by his side in those early years of his career in America and Russia. It is an inexplicable omission in his autobiography. I think Roy alone was responsible for this psychological weakness, if I may say so. Only in his *Letters From Jail*, which were written to Ellen in Paris and elsewhere has Roy revealed some of his innermost personal thoughts and that also as so many understatements.

How come the man who loved all humanity did not gather courage to express his love and affection for one who was the closest to him in America and Russia? Was it due to some psychological set-back in his formative years? Or was it due to the fact that he did not wish to hurt the susceptibilities of Ellen Roy who had braved all hazards and remained by his side through thick and thin.

As I have already stated Roy harboured a rich storehouse of sentiment in the depths of his heart. If he was possessive of any one thing, it was his sentiments. He did his best to keep them away from public gaze. He nourished them within himself and ultimately carried his secrets with him to his samadhi at 13 Mohini Road. ■ ■ ■

17. Roy and Mahamahopadhyaya P. V. Kane

Roy was basically a teacher. When he was in Russia he had founded a military school at Tashkent where he gave training to Muslim Mohajirins in communist ideology and strategy. His political speeches and writings were not merely agitational. They were also educational.

I remember an occasion when Roy was the chief speaker in a meeting held under the auspices of the Bombay Renaissance Club of which I happened to be President.

Mahamahopadhyaya P. V. Kane, the then Vice-Chancellor of the Bombay University, presided over it. Roy's subject was "Indian Renaissance". As usual, he enriched it with opposite references and quotations from our ancient schools of philosophy and other Sanskrit literature. A stern critic of Indian obscurantism that Roy was, he also emphasised the need to salvage such abiding values from our heritage as had remained pertinent to modern times. He made it clear that he did not believe in transferring allegiance from Manu to Marx dogmatically or blindly.

In his speech the scholarly Mahamahopadhyaya said that although he was aware of Roy's political background and contribution, he had not visualised that he was going to be in the presence of a historian and philosopher. He suggested that Roy should abjure politics and devote his time to philosophy and that if Roy agreed to do so he was prepared to create a chair in philosophy in the Bombay University. He added that Roy had revealed himself more as an educationist than a politician.

The learned Mahamahopadhyaya's observation had its validity. Utter honesty of thought has no place in party politics. A politician who wants to be a worldly success must needs pay obeisance to the proclivities of his followers. He has to stir up their emotions, passions and prejudices so as to ensure his success. Because it is futile to expect sheer rationalism to go in appeal with the masses.

But Roy was primarily a rationalist and then a politician. So he always brushed aside political expediency in favour of his

intellectual integrity, not unaware of the consequences of such an approach of his. Even so, he continued to be engaged in active party politics because of his deep-rooted urge to make the Indian people conscious of their rights and responsibilities as free men.

With the ushering in of the Radical Humanist movement Roy's activities became more educative than ever before. He said at that time that he was getting old and had decided to devote himself to "this educative movement" which, he was convinced, was bound to have "a lasting value". He said over and again that at the time of elections the task of Radical Humanists, who would be outside the pale of party politics, was to tell the people: "You may vote for any party. But before you do that, examine the programme and promises and the record of the people who make them".

Thus his immediate aim was certainly practical. But knowing that Rome was not built in a day, he did not expect miracles to happen. He said he would be satisfied if the efforts of Radical Humanists succeeded in creating small oases of democracy in the vast desert of power politics. He wanted the movement to grow upwards from the lowest rung of the ladder, as it were. He said: "a few thinking persons can act as a catalyst".

Roy's journey through life in quest of freedom had brought him to the green fields of quietude and serenity where the zephyr of enlightenment kissed the cheeks of seekers of truth. Verily, Roy had arrived at the gates of his Shangri-la when death the supreme cheater played his trump card and . . . . ■ ■ ■

18. Roy and Sir Shah Mohmed Sulayman, Kt.

Very few knew that Roy was extremely competent in higher mathematics and physics. He could convincingly discuss Einstein's Theory of Relativity with any knowledgeable person. In his "Letters" he writes: "Only an Einstein can carry his laboratory under the hat". In another place he speaks of the

group of physicists and nature-philosophers "who very sharply criticise the mystic metaphysics of the Jeans-Eddington school and for the purpose necessarily reject Positivism (and consequently Berklean Idealism) yet stop on the roadside and play the ostrich game. They call themselves "Critical Realists" or "Physical Realists". Referring to Reichenbach and Rev. W. Sellers, Professor of Philosophy in Wisconsin says: "It would be highly interesting to face men like Sellers and Reichenbach with a few straight questions". And then he switches over to Einstein's "The World As I See It" and adds "I am naturally curious to see what the world as Einstein sees it is like".

Sir Shah Mohmed Sulayman, Kt. Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court was also a mathematician of world repute. Sometime in 1936, he had predicted that Einstein's calculations were inexact in certain respect. The then Government of India sponsored an expedition to Japan for observation of a total Solar Eclipse. Their report is said to have confirmed Sir Shah Mohmed's thesis somewhat.

The learned judge had written a provocative paper on the subject. It was also published in the *Independent India*. Roy discussed it with some Royists and suggested that anyone competent in the subject should pursue the controversy with his reply. But no one did it.

Then one fine morning we all read a learned article by Roy himself in *Independent India* Weekly pinpointing the fallacy in Sir Shah Mohmed's thesis. Later on when I was again with Roy in the evening I said: "But, Roy, you wanted someone else to write out the reply. What made you do it?"

He replied: "That's true, Jamshed. I would have appreciated someone else in our group to keep the topic alive. But when I found that it had gone by default not only in our group but also everywhere else in India, I had to fill up the gap myself. Now, I expect a rejoinder from our great mathematician".

Since my knowledge of physics and mathematics was nothing to write home about, I could not participate in the ensuing discussion and posed as a very "wise" listener.

This incident is one more proof of Roy's role as a teacher. He always encouraged his comrades to come out in their own right.

Striking at a tangent, the above incident reminds me of what Roy had once said vis-a-vis physics and psychology. Traditional thinking takes cognizance of a hiatus between the physical universe (physics) and the world of mind (psychology) signified by the term psyche. In the light of modern researches and studies Roy came to believe that psyche the subject of psychology was not a metaphysical or mystic category.

Questioning the postulate as a non-conformist and going deeper in the subject Roy arrived at a startling conclusion. He submitted that psyche being the sub-conscious part of the mind was a biological heritage. It was "the umbilical cord that bound man to Mother Nature or Earth". As such psyche was the subject proper of the science of psychology and not a mere speculative thought. It should be viewed, he maintained, as made up of physico-chemical constituents and that its study should be pursued on strictly scientific basis. He further believed that it was within the range of philosophy to break the watertight compartment between physics and psychology.

Had Roy lived longer he might have given one more contribution to the world of thought. In spite of his other pressing activities Roy managed to find time to continue his interest in scientific subjects and keep himself well informed of latest developments in many a science. In the wide list of books which he wanted Ellen to send him when he was in Jail there is quite an imposing number dealing with mathematics, physics, bio-chemistry, psychology and behaviourism. ■ ■ ■

19. Roy and Netaji's emissary

Despite their political differences, Roy had a soft corner for Subhas Babu. Whenever his name came up in conversation one could see Roy had great regard for Netaji and never allowed anyone to question his patriotic fervour, integrity and utter selflessness. In fact Roy felt sorry that in spite of his best efforts he had failed to convince Netaji of his scientific humanist approach to world freedom. As always, Roy fought ideas and not men.

Once Roy divulged to us a strange experience he had in

Dehra Dun. Subhas Chandra Bose had formed the Indian National Army under the aegis of the Japanese. The latter had overrun South-east Asian countries and subjugated them under fascist terror. Subhas Babu and his army were poised in Singapore. His stock had gone up in the eyes of well meaning but ill-informed Nationalist Indians. They had refused to draw the cardinal distinction between fascism and democracy and looked upon Netaji as their liberator from the yoke of imperialism which happened to be British, who despite their acts of commission and omission were, by far, the most liberal of all the imperialist governments.

About this time an emissary of Netaji came to see Roy at the dead of night at 13 Mohini Road. He had brought a personal message for Roy from the compatriot who hailed from the same village as Roy's. Netaji wanted Roy to join hands with him in the urgent task of India's liberation.

Roy had an exhaustive dialogue with the emissary and tried his best to convince him that even if Subhas Babu were ever to succeed in his sincere but ill-conceived idea it would be replacing the democratically inclined British rulers with fanatical Japanese fascists and then the fate of India would be much worse than it ever was under the British.

The emissary began to threaten him and said that when Netaji came to India as a victor, Roy was bound to be held answerable for his "betrayal" and liquidated.

Now Roy flared up. He caught the emissary by the neck and dragged him out of the house and said: "Thank your stars that I am not an informer. Else I would have handed you over to the police as a traitor to the cause of freedom. Now take away your ugly self from my sight while the going is good".

The emissary was flabbergasted and beat a hasty retreat in the darkness of the night.

This incident bears out another fine trait in Roy. His political enemies—and especially Indian communists—had gone all out to vilify Roy not only as "a stooge of British Imperialism" but also "an informer".

But Roy's life was an open book for anyone who cared to read. He soared to great heights free like the skylark. He was never a chattel in the hands of any master and was incapable of being an informer ever.

Above all Roy was a moral man in the best sense of the term. That is why the first Indian communist was also the first one to become an ex-communist. ■ ■ ■

20. Roy and Veer Sarvarkar

Roy was very anxious to meet Veer Savarkar who was then in Bombay. Of course, intellectually both were poles apart. Savarkar was a most admirable orthodox patriot whereas Roy's concern for mankind went beyond geographical frontiers. Whereas Savarkar was an ideal Indian, Roy was an ideal cosmopolite. While the one was deeply religious, the other was a heretic.

Even so, whenever Roy reminisced over Savarkar he had nothing but admiration and affection for the grand old man who had given his all for the freedom of his country and who was Roy's first hero in his school days.

Somehow or other the meeting could not take place because the ageing freedom fighter was not keeping good health.

Then one fine morning in 1938, if I remember aright, when Hilla and I were waiting for Roy and Ellen to join us at breakfast, we had to rub our eyes to believe the spectacle. We saw Roy coming down the staircase, immaculately dressed in a long flowing dhoti in Bengali style, a kurta and shawl and a cap, followed by Ellen in sari instead of her usual Western morning dress. Of course, we had often seen Ellen in sari. But as for Roy, his sartorial makeup was most unusual. We had always seen him in a bush coat and trousers or sometimes in a suit.

Hilla joked at the transformation saying: "Why Roy, you are metamorphosed. You have become a hundred per cent Indian all of a sudden".

There was a childlike twinkle in his eyes as he literally jumped down in his chair at the table.

"You know, Hilla", he said, "at long last, I have made it. I am going to pay my respects to Veer Savarkar and I thought I should do it in the fittest manner possible. I am sure the old man will be pleased to see me dressed as a fullfledged Indian rather than a Westernised revolutionary".

I have a sneaking suspicion that when Roy was in Veer Savarkar's presence he must have touched his feet in the traditional Indian way. Along with his extraordinary intellectual calibre, Roy had also retained the sterling qualities of humility, grace and decency. ■ ■ ■

21. Roy and Mahatma Gandhi

In spite of their sharp differences, Gandhiji like Roy was also a humanist. But whereas the former was a puritan, the latter was a hedonist. Where one was a mystic, the other was a materialist, in the best philosophico-scientific sense of the term. Gandhiji always emphasised the role of religion in all human behaviour including politics. Roy was a rationalist—nay, an atheist to boot. As such he was uncompromisingly opposed to bringing religion in politics—religion as it is generally understood with its rites, ceremonies, taboos and prayers. He considered it as an impediment to social progress on secular lines. At the Faizpur Conference of the Congress (1937) Roy did not hesitate to risk his popularity, which was certainly very high then, by refusing to attend the evening prayer meetings of Gandhiji. He maintained unequivocally that these had no place in the secular political programme of the Congress. As a deeply religious man Gandhiji wanted Indian society to change within its traditional framework. He simply could not come out completely from his entrenched orthodoxy. He saw virtues in the outmoded concept of *chaturvarnya* and strove to establish a new "Ram Rajya" with his original thesis of Trusteeship. But he also had the saving grace of looking at other religions with reverence—an approach which did not cut ice with vehement Sanatanists and hidebound nationalists.

On the other hand Roy. had delved deeply in several philosophies and sciences and had a cosmic view of world history and its civilisations. He had dedicated himself to bringing about the transformation of Indian society—nay, world society—based on a strictly secular and scientific programme of his own. But despite many irreconcilable differences between them, he never flinched to appreciate and support

Gandhiji's stance on moral values.

The practical genius of the Mahatma had prompted him to fight for the rightful place of the poor and downtrodden in society in the name of religion. He rightly maintained that all men are equal in the eyes of God; and in an effort to raise the social status of the so-called untouchables (*achhuts* of the orthodox Hindu religion) he renamed them as Harijans (people of God). That is why he advocated and fought for the entry of Harijans in Hindu temples, which had remained closed to them for centuries under the dominance of tradition-bound Hindus of all shades.

Roy, on the other hand, had raised the issue on an epistemological level. He objected to Gandhiji's approach to the problem as taking one step forward and two steps backward in the total fight for the social emancipation of mankind. He maintained that such a well-meant but nonetheless irrational attitude would only help strengthening the shackles of superstition to which the Indian people were already chained. How would their status improve, he asked, and how will they ever be able to keep their heads high when they bowed down in obeisance before the concept of God as an omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient entity? Certainly, it would deprive them of the opportunity to become makers of their destiny. That is why Roy considered Jawaharlal Nehru the agnostic as "the only Westernised man" he had come across in the Indian National Congress. From this point of view, it may be said that where the nation's Mahatma was a socio-religious reformist, Roy was a scientific humanist.

M. N. Roy, "the man who looked ahead" was willy nilly advocating a big leap forward in the social evolution of the Indian people. It seemed as if he wanted a mutation to take place as early as possible. Where the philosopher of Dehra Dun was an idealist, the saint of Sabarmati was a pragmatist. But then Roy, who was as much in quest of truth as Gandhiji, had à different postulate which he would not sacrifice at the altar of expediency. Roy had similar logical objections to Gandhiji's panacea in the sphere of politics. But here I am concerned with Roy the Man and not Roy "the seagreen incorruptible" in politics

Roy admitted most of Gandhiji's ideas on the moral plane.

But what he objected to was the Mahatmic methodology employed in carrying out the secular political programme of the National Congress.

In one of the "Letters" Roy refers to the fact that in jail he had started learning to ply "the divine spinning wheel with which Gandhiji proposes to save the world" and goes on to quip a joke against himself: "It is an irony of fate that I should have to do this! The Mahatma has finally scored a point over me. If he only knew it".

At the time of the tragic assassination of the Mahatma, Roy was in Calcutta at a specially convened conference. It was to finalise the momentous decision to voluntarily liquidate the Radical Democratic Party and transform it into the Radical Humanist movement. When the debate and discussion had reached a high peak, Roy received the catastrophic news. Like all right thinking persons the world over, he, too, was shocked. He was speechless for some time. Then he informed the gathering of the tragedy. He looked sad and somewhat confused and stopped the deliberations for the day.

The next day he drafted his famous tribute to Gandhiji which was published in the very next issue of *Independent India* on the first page and also released it to the Press. We were all deeply moved by its contents. No follower or admirer could have paid a truer tribute to the Mahatma than Roy.

Later on when someone asked him how it came that Roy had penned the article in such glowing terms, Roy just said: "In death there is no enmity".

That was the stuff Roy was made of—always decent to the core. ■ ■ ■

22. Roy and the Sardar

Although their paths were different both Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and M. N. Roy were dedicated to the cause of Indian freedom. Both did not believe in mincing words and were straightforward in proclaiming their respective viewpoints fearlessly. Both were farsighted. Both had respect for each other's integrity. Despite their ideological differences they understood each other perfectly. There were few Congressmen

for whom this can be said with equal justification. Apart from Nehru, I know of one and that was Babu Rajendra Prasad. Striking at a tangent I may be permitted to mention an incident which comes to my mind:

In one of the AICC meetings when Roy was still in the Congress some Leftist Congressman criticised him and began to resort to character assassination. But the fair-minded Babuji who was in the chair got up at once and rebuked him for such a wanton attack on Roy's personality. He said it was uncalled for and did not do credit to those who were in the fold. He added that although he did not see eye to eye with Roy he had full faith in his integrity and he should be at least heard with an open mind.

Roy had great respect for his political opponent Shri Vallabhbhai and had said that he had been correctly described as "the master builder of India's destiny". When the undisputed Sardar of Indian Nationalism fell seriously ill Roy wrote: "I sincerely join in the prayers that he may live for many more years".

In an article published in the *Radical Humanist* Weekly of December 13, 1950, Roy has briefly but nonetheless unstintedly evaluated the achievements of by far the most clearheaded stalwart in the Congress and described his analysis as "a token of my great respect for the man who would never be my ideal". Roy compared the iron-willed Sardar to Machiavelli and not Bismarck; and lest he be misunderstood hastened to add that "Machiavelli was not a rogue" as superficially portrayed by those who had not made a first hand study of the life and letters of the Chanakya of the West.

In return the Sardar had all respect for Roy's utter honesty of thought and intellectual calibre and would have welcomed him in the High Command had Roy accepted the undisputed leadership of Gandhiji.

I cannot vouch for it but I remember rather vaguely that at the time of the Haripura Session (1938) there was a rumour that the pragmatic Sardar has entertained the idea of winning Roy over by offering him the "gadi" as President of that Session in preference to Subhas Chandra Bose, if only Roy was prepared to dilute his incessant intellectual onslaughts on the Mahatma.

I was already a zealous admirer of the Sardar when I joined the Congress and then also became a member of the Parsi Rajkiya Sabha of the affable B. F. Bharucha of simple habits. As one of the likely "Congress Dictators" my turn was to come after the first forty had become "the guests of His Majesty's Government". But I missed the opportunity as Gandhiji had called off the Civil Disobedience Movement earlier. But all that is another story.

All that need be said here is that my joining the Radical Democratic Party of India as a founder member in 1940 and remaining a Radical Humanist ever since its dissolution has not in any way affected my admiration and reverence for Vallabhbhai Patel the man.

I had few opportunities to come into direct contact with him and I know what a lion-hearted man he was. Like Roy, he was also misunderstood by the Indian Leftists, if not some Centrist Congressmen themselves. Sometimes I feel like indulging in wishful thinking that there was some substance in the canard I have referred to above.

It is frightening to imagine the fate of free India if the Sardar had not been there to prevail upon the Princely Order to liquidate itself peacefully under a just and fair agreement guaranteeing the privy purses of several princes and nobles, big and small. It is a sad commentary on the working of Indian politics that the allowances were terminated later on under the specious plea of remaining true to the concept of the socialist pattern of society . . . .

Practice of power politics had again gained ascendency over the ideal of decency.

Roy's one regret was that the hero of the Bardoli satyagraha movement had not been successful in "training up an heir-apparent". When the Sardar died Roy observed, at the risk of incurring the wrath of the Indian people, that "his death is in fact a greater blow than that of the Mahatma".

Whether one agrees with him or not, Roy the Man never equivocated and was decent enough to lay bare his non-conformist convictions as a supreme rationalist who tried to be as objective as humanly possible.

I have deliberately said: "as objective as humanly possible" and thereby hangs a tale.

I remember an occasion when Roy was staying with us at the Casa and the Royists present were discussing some topic of political nature. Someone called him a "free thinker"; and the remark became a cue for Roy to switch over to an extempore philosophical dissertation in a minor key, of course.

As was his wont, Roy became epistemological and expounded the limits of subjectivism and objectivism in human nature. He began with reminding us that the concept of free thinking had become popular in the 19th century when a galaxy of rationalists, mainly in England, had taken upon themselves the thankless task of exposing the fallacies in organised religion, understandingly supported by the Establishment everywhere.

He maintained that from a purely philosophical point of view no one can be *absolutely* free in his thinking. The processes involved were determined by the limits of the circumstances, however wide in which one happens to be, one's education however thorough and surroundings however vast they be. In the final analysis, man's thinking is circumscribed by the storage of knowledge at his disposal at a given time and motivated by the requirements of the age to which he belonged. Subject to such limitations, man can choose to be "free" in his thinking; and will be objective in his outlook so long as he sticks to the honesty of his thought, even when it goes against his predilections and prejudices. But all said and done hurnan nature being what it is, man's thinking is bound to be influenced by his personality; and to that extent he cannot escape being subjective. And after all analytically speaking, there is bound to be some over-lapping between subjectivism and objectivism.

But since there is no end to the acquisition of knowledge, which must needs go on increasing from time to time and age to age, man can be called free in his thinking relatively speaking only. This continual accumulation of knowledge is both man's strength and weakness.

Hence a "free thinker" should not consider his opinions as the last word in knowledge. That is why Roy did not favour the use of the term which, he submitted, was likely to cause semantic confusion from a purely philosophical point of view etc. etc.

The expedient use of the "etcetra" by me is meant to expose my limitations. I have never had time to go in for a thorough study of philosophy. At best I am just a novice in the subject.

But if Roy had been alive, Messieurs Michel Feucauldt and Pierre Levy Strauss would have been happy to shake hands with Roy and have an exchange of ideas on the reigning philosophy of Structuralism. ■ ■ ■

23. Roy and Stalin

During the war years, I happened to be the honorary Chairman of the first Film Advisory Board of the Government of India. One of my jobs was to scrutinise every documentary film, British, Russian and American imported into India and make my recommendations for their general release as War Effort films. When the Roys were with us, Hilla and I would take them to Wadia Movietone Studios at Lavji Castle, Parel and project such films in the Studio theatre as would be of interest to them. Once I showed them that moving Russian documentary on the Defence of Stalingrad.

Stalin had made a scapegoat of Roy after the failure of the Russian communist strategy in China and he had to leave the USSR for good with a price on his head. He had enough reasons to hate Stalin for the injustice done to him. But Roy the humanist was incapable of hatred not only vis-a-vis Stalin but also all his enemies and opponents in all walks of life.

When we came out of the auditorium Roy had a strange look in his eyes. It seemed as if he was re-living his past in Russia. And then he said: "Uncle Joe has aged very much under the strain of the war".

That was all. On such occasions I felt as if Roy was an enigma. How could I comprehend him when I did not know of even a small fraction of tribulations he had undergone in the aftermath of his extraordinary popularity and respect in the Kremlin? And yet he was generous enough not to make an issue of it. Had he been more communicative about his sentiments I might have understood his overall attitude better.

It is another story that Roy's analysis which had been thrown overboard by the Kremlin at that time was subsequently vindicated.

When Stalin died Roy paid him a rather biassed tribute. It was published in the *Radical Humanist* Weekly. In that article

Roy has slurred over the innumerable horrifying deeds of the ruthless Russian dictator and tried to exonerate him as a creature of circumstances. Some of us were naturally revolted. I, for one, did not have the heart to broach the subject as I knew that Roy had a soft corner for Stalin.

The only explanation for this lapse on the part of a convinced humanist like Roy can be traced to his exaggerated sense of loyalty for his one time comrade-in-arms. If so, it shows that Roy was a normal human being with normal failings. And that should endear him all the more to his devotees who were aware of his magnanimous nature.

I do not remember Roy ever speaking harshly about his Russian comrades or the British and the Indians serving under the British colonial rule. His criticism was always impersonal and objective. He even ignored the privations he had to undergo during his six years of incarceration in India, although it had affected his health to such a degree that he never recovered from it completely. In all fairness he should have been treated as an "A" class political prisoner. But the British Indian Government had unjustly kept him in confines as a "B" class one all throughout.

Even in jail his mind was preoccupied with the fate of the people in Europe who had come under the iron heel of Hitler. In one of his letters to Ellen he writes: " . . . In comparison with the terrible ordeal of you all living in the Third Reich, my personal troubles are insignificant . . .".

When Hitler's hordes were knocking at the gates of Moscow, everyone thought that the city was doomed to fall. Misdirected Indian Nationalists were gloating over the impending catastrophe. But Roy had unbounded faith in Stalin's grit. Two or three days before the Nazi army started retreating, the press sought his interview. He stated emphatically that "Moscow will not fall".

Even the Royists had become sceptical. D. B. Karnik, who was with him only a day before the historical repetition of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, looked very glum. But Roy smiled and said: "Don't be disheartened, D. B. Uncle Joe will still save the world from the Nazi holocaust".

When Roy's daring prediction came true, no less a newspaper than the *Blitz* Weekly which was rabidly anti-Roy

flashed a terse comment in block form:

Give the devil his due
M. N. Roy had said:
"Moscow will not fall".

Roy had childlike faith in the ability of Stalin to raise what he called "the banner of Red Napoleanism" in Europe with the victory of the Allied Democratic Forces. But when he saw that Stalin had betrayed "the revolution" and degenerated it into what he again called "Bonapartism", he forthright shed all his illusions about Stalin and censored him with undisguised sadness in articles after articles.

Roy had felt the impact of the staggering blow to his hopes in his heart of hearts. But he did not bemoan. Whenever he dilated on the subject he assumed the pose of an impartial historian who was only concerned with the facts of the case however much they went against his erstwhile assumptions which had now crumbled like a house of cards.

Here I am reminded of Jules Lefebvre's painting of the nude figure of Truth coming out of the well holding aloft a mirror from which emanates the dazzling light of knowledge. It may well be said of Roy that whenever he saw the arresting emblematical figure approaching him he welcomed her unhesitatingly with the benign smile of a Greek philosopher of antiquity.

Roy was decent to the core. That is why after the inevitable break he wrote his last letter to Stalin stating that he considered the bourgeois virtue of decency as a Bolshevik virtue and that it had an inalienable place in communist society also. ■ ■ ■

24. Roy and Tayab Shaikh

Tayab Shaikh was the first among the three Royists in Europe, the other two being Sunder Kabadi and Brijesh Singh. He had met him in Berlin in 1928. Roy created such an impact on Shaikh that he gave up his studies in Engineering to become the pioneer of the Royist movement. It was due to the efforts of the trio that Roy could carry out his master plan to come to India incognito in 1930. Homi Pardiwala has told me

that he too had a hand in it.

Shaikh was a thorough organiser and excellent contact man. He had come here a little earlier than Roy. By the time Roy landed as "Dr. Mahmud" in Karachi on December 11, 1930, Tayab Shaikh had prepared the ground for his clandestine stay at the Juhu Theosophical Society in Bombay and kept him safe from the ceaseless pursuit of the C.I.D. who had got wind of Roy's illegal entry.

It was again Shaikh who had written the first biography of Roy entitled *The Man Who Looked Ahead* under the pseudonym of "A. K. Hindi" since he was himself in hiding at the time. He was also a seasoned orator. His enthusiasm was unbounded and his loyalty to Roy unimpeachable. He was "passion incarnate" and loved Roy with the fervour of a beloved. Roy also held him in great affection. He strove ceaselessly for the Royist cause and suffered privations cheerfully.

As a confirmed revolutionary Tayab Shaikh did not have any glamour for jail-going which had become a "must" for Indian Nationalists to give proof of their patriotism during the struggle for freedom movement.

Once Tayab Shaikh had been arrested in the late Thirties and taken from the Police Commissioner's office to the Esplanade Police Court securely handcuffed, D. B. Karnik was walking side by side with him for some time. Suddenly Shaikh spoke in English: "D. B., I will try to escape from Jail not so much for my sake as for the sake of Roy. Shall I try it today?" Such was his devotion to Roy.

Shaikh was a ubiquitous visitor at the Casa when Roy and Ellen were with us. I had gone through his book avidly and I always enjoyed his exuberance and wit. Sometimes Roy would take him aside and have a *tete-a-tete* with him. But somehow or other Shaikh had felt as if he was an outsider among Royists. I cannot say with certainty as to what irked him.

But he had gone through terrible ordeals having been arrested a number of times and this had affected him physically. He had almost developed a persecution complex.

One fateful evening Roy and Tayab had a long conference. I remember both were sitting on the verandah and discussing something seriously over a free flow of Scotch. In course of time heat had been generated and their voices had reached a

crescendo. Then suddenly Tayab Shaikh got up and left in a huff. Roy also got up and watched Tayab go out of the gate. He remained standing for quite sometime after Tayab had disappeared in the darkness of the night.

Then Roy came in the hall and sat down looking dejected. I do not remember who else were with us. But none of us dared ask him as to what had transpired. Not even Ellen. There was a sad expression on his face and a vacant stare in his eyes.

After some time Roy just said half to himself: "He is gone but he will come back".

Throughout the night Roy was off-colour and the man who relished the good, old Rhine wine with a sparkle in his eyes just drank it mechanically.

Here I may mention an incident at the Lucknow Conference of the Radical Democratic Party held in December 1942 and narrated to me by D. B. Karnik.

When Tayab Shaikh was still in the party he had gathered a group of Royists around him in Ahmedabad. He had abjured his direct participation in the Party's programme. But nonetheless he had carried out his activities in his individual right and advised his group to attend the Conference. Some differences arose in the course of the deliberations. The group resented some adverse comments made by Roy against Tayab Shaikh and decided to stage a walk-out. Roy jumped down from the dais, overtook them, ran up to the front door, closed it quickly and shouted: "Do you want the party to break down at this critical juncture? Our enemies are just waiting for an opportunity to create a split, malign and drive us out of the main current of our freedom movement. Do you want to play into their hands? I implore you to bear with me and listen to me before doing something foolhardy".

Roy's sincerity of tone had a magic affect on the dissidents. All of them returned to their seats and heard him in pindrop silence. His sobriety and persuasiveness won the day for him and the Conference ended on a happy note.

I have failed to understand why Tayab Shaikh should have been expelled from Radical Democratic Party in 1942. Roy should have gone all out to avert the tragedy by prevailing upon his colleagues to take a lenient view of recalcitrance of one who was the very first Royist in Europe in 1929-30 and

whose love for Roy and loyalty to the cause was unimpeachable in essence, at least.

Tayab Shaikh never came again to Casa da Vinci. But he always remained a radical democrat and Royist. After the end of the World War, he had gone back to London. When I was there for a short time in 1950 I tried my best to meet him but without any success. Even Sunder Kabadi who was then in London and whom I had met did not know of Tayab's whereabouts.

But what was the cause of that rupture? Was it that Tayab was too, too possessive and did not relish the idea of Roy sharing his affection with others? Roy, of course, felt Tayab's absence intensely. But as was his wont he never dilated on the estrangement. There was something abnormal about Roy's sentimental reactions, which none of us was able to understand. Except, perhaps, Ellen. And then she, too, did not touch upon that aspect in any of her writings except one, and that also only after Roy's death on January 25, 1954. ■ ■ ■

25. Roy and V. B. Karnik

Once at least in 1939 there was a serious difference of opinion between Roy and Karnik which at that time seemed to lead to a parting of ways. It arose as a result of fortuitous circumstances. Roy and Subhas Babu were riding high on the crest of popularity and had captured the imagination of the people by their revolutionary ideas and their fascinating past. Roy had not minced words in voicing his opposition to Gandhiji's methodology of infusing religious ideas in secular politics. He was already on his way to become the *bete noire* of Indian Nationalism and prepared to face the consequences. But he took strong exception to Gandhiji's opposition to Subhas Babu who was every inch a dedicated nationalist.

The 1939 debacle at the Tripuri session of the Congress need not be elaborated here. Suffice it to say that Subhas Babu had not heeded Roy's advice to form his own Executive Committee as continuing President of the Congress. Roy founded the League of Radical Congressmen in Calcutta on May 1, 1939

making it clear that the Radical Congressmen stood for revolution inside the Congress.

However the Netaji of the future had different ideas. About the same time he formed the Forward Bloc in Bombay in June 1939 and had not consulted Roy about it. Then Subhas Babu took the initiative to form the so-called Left Consolidation Committee set up by all leftist groups which were supposed to work outside the Congress. Roy tried to dissuade him as he had legitimate fears that any such action initiated by a Congressman outside its fold would be frowned upon by the High Command. Such a rebel would run the danger of being thrown overboard from the sturdy ship of adventure that was the Indian National Congress. But Subhas Babu had toyed with the idea too fervently and would not give it up.

In the immediate next meeting of the League of Radical Congressmen held in Poona the proposal to associate with Subhas Babu was duly approved. Karnik who was most enthusiastic about it took upon himself the task of attending to the so-called Left Consolidation Committee in Bombay outside the Congress.

But Roy's fears materialised sooner than he had expected. As President of the National Congress, Babu Rajendra Prasad issued a warning that anyone who associated himself with the Committee would be doing so at the risk of being expelled from the Congress Party. Roy realised the futility of facing the powers-that-be in the Congress with a romantic challenge.

By dint of history the Congress had already become the fountainhead of the national democratic revolution. It was Roy's thesis that the objective could be attained only by the leftists and socialists strengthening the movement in a unified manner. They could only do so by sinking their differences and not endanger the solidarity of the Indian National Congress by creating provocative situations in the name of unadulterated socialism. After all, the Congress was composed of politicians of various shades whose fundamental task was to mobilise the masses on a common platform and usher in a burgeois democratic revolution by peaceful means. His prophetic jail letters to the Congress Socialists were a pointer in the direction of his political slant. So, as was his wont, Roy re-assessed the given issue in the light of the newly arisen threat and came

to the conclusion that it was suicidal at that juncture to leave the Congress on an issue of comparatively lesser importance.

At that time Roy happened to be in Poona and was staying in a bungalow specially allotted to him by that great fighter in the cause of civil liberties and President of the Servants of India Society, Shri Vaze. The Royists group was terribly excited and had hectic discussions with Roy before he left Poona.

D. B. Karnik, V. B's brother and another early Royist has told me that he was present in Poona and remembers how Roy argued his case. He said to the effect: "When I felt that I had to make a choice between my membership of the Communist International and my principles, I did not hesitate to get out of it. With what consequences, you all know. I am not afraid. If it was a question of compromising my principles I would leave the Congress immediately. But I do not want to foresake the substance that is the Indian National Congress for the shadow that is the Left Consolidation Committee".

But Karnik seemed to have burnt his boats behind him. He had launched the campaign in Bombay in such right earnest and had put in such hard work that he found it difficult to turn back.

A public meeting of the proposed committee had been arranged in Bombay at the Cowasji Patel Hall, Dhobitalao on July 9, 1939 in which Karnik was a principal participant. Roy sent word to him that he should not do so. But Karnik decided otherwise. Roy had already released a statement imploring Subhas Babu not to resort to what he termed as "romantic adventurism" born of desperation. He was sure that the juggernaut which was the Indian National Congress would crush Subhas Babu under its ponderous wheels sooner or later and that the great freedom fighter would be deprived of the best avenue available to him to carry on his crusade as he thought fit in his honest but nonetheless impractical judgement.

As stated above, Karnik had gone all out in support of Subhas Babu. Naturally, Roy was not happy at such a turn of events. He had considered Karnik as one of his "spiritual heirs". Soon after July 9, Roy suddenly turned up at Casa da Vinci with Ellen. It was a welcome surprise for my wife and me to find them with us. I still remember the benign smile on his face as he climbed the steps.

Soon thereafter when we opened the topic I asked him casually why it was *that* necessary for him to rush down from the Western Ghats to the plains of Bombay in the grip of the torrential July rains. He said: "I thought Karnik needed me by his side" and quipped: "Well, if the mountain does not come to Mohmed, Mohmed must go to the mountain".

"Are you not late?" I asked. "Karnik seems to have made up his mind". He replied: "Karnik is most welcome to do so. Far be it from me to foist my point of view on him or for that matter any Radical Democrat. All that I want is to have a heart-to-heart talk with him and try to convince him of my stand".

"And if he does not see eye to eye with you?" I asked.

Roy replied: "Well, in that case V. B. will still be a good Radical Democrat. Besides, I cannot forget all that he has done for the cause we believe in. He is honest to the core".

It was then that Roy betrayed the hidden streak of emotionalism in him. It was then that I came to know from him for the first time of some telling incidents as to how Karnik had stood by him like the Rock of Gibraltar in the past. He also narrated to Hilla and me as to how Vimlabai (Karnik's wife) had prevailed upon him to sell her gold bangles so that an issue of *Independent India* (of which K. was the editor) could come out in time. I remember how emotional Roy had become and how his eyes had become moist with tears of affection—tears which had gathered to the eyes even if they did not flow down his cheeks.

Such immense faith Roy had in V. B's integrity and intelligence. D. B. has supplemented it by narrating to me what happened at the time of Faizpur Congress (1937), which Roy had attended.

He had confabulations with comrades present there. But D. B. had his misgivings. He said: "Your approach, Comrade Roy, is certainly rational, intellectual and correct. But, except for you, I am afraid, I do not find anyone in our group who can place our ideas effectively before the people".

Roy smiled and said: "You seem to have overlooked the mettle your brother is made of. V. B. is competent to do so. Moreover he can face any intellectual in any other party and win hands down".

To revert to the main narration: Roy and Karnik met at the

office of the Radical Democratic Party at Ratilal Mansion. I do not know what transpired during that "confrontation". But Roy's persuasiveness prevailed and Karnik veered round to Roy's point of view. He was no longer interested in "L'Affaire Left Consolidation Committee". Had Roy been arrogant or impatient the storm in the tea cup might have burst its way out and resulted in some unfortunate parting of ways. As it was, all was well that ended well.

The rest is history. ■ ■ ■

26. Roy and Swami Agehananda Bharati

Agehananda Bharati, an Austrian nee Leonard Fischer, was enamoured of Sanskrit when he was only a schoolgoing boy. When he came to India at the end of the Second World War he devoted himself to an intensive study of not only his pet subject but also monastic Buddhism. In due course he metamorphosed himself into a swami on the banks of the Ganges. Any dilation on his eventful experiences and deep erudition is not called for here. Suffice it to say that this unique swami, who is a Professor of Philosophy at the Syracuse University, USA, travelled some fifteen hundred miles in his ochre robe—thus remaining steadfast to our ancient tradition in this respect, at least.

When he published his autobiography under the title of *The Ochre Robe* he was barely forty years of age. It created a stir in literary and philosophical circles everywhere. The glossary at the end of that book and bibliographies in several of his hundred tracts like "Esthetical Norm and Values in Modern India" bear testimony to the depth of his learning.

Verily, the convert became the bane of the community of swamis by and large, not to mention the uneasiness he caused in the minds of orthodox savants of Indian philosophy. This is due to his dispassionate approach to our holy scriptures and the attitude of its holier-than-thou protagonists. In "Aesthetical Norm" he answers the question why he lays stress on the erotic part of the metamorphosis of Indian aesthetics. It is "because the libido in all its norms is the basis

of aesthetic judgement''.

His ochre robe seemed to belie his way of life—far removed from any dogmatic stress on asceticism which is considered an inalienable attribute of swamihood. Although he began as a vegetarian by choice he ultimately gave it up when the realisation dawned upon him that it was not an essential of swamihood. He is a connoisseur of good food and wine and believes in satiating his hunger and thirst in a big way. He has gambolled in the fountain of pleasure and bathed in its sparkling waters of variegated hues.

"Ever let the Fancy roam
Pleasure never is at home."

It seems as if this thought of Keats has been lurking in the mind of the Bharati ever since he was Leonard Fischer and when he must have come across it.

Why, he is the only Swami in the world who has not deemed it below his dignity to be interested in the Indian commercial cinema and with his knowledge of Hindi has dwelled on its anthropology in an interesting manner. If ever there was a swami who can be called a jolly good fellow it is this unique intellectual who has equated holiness with the better side of mundane life.

It was but natural that the controversial swami-philosopher and the original radical humanist should be drawn toward each other. Both shared the virtue of non-conformism and were inclined toward the hedonic concept of "Life is for living".

Agehananda has described his first serendipitous meeting with Roy sometime in 1951 very graphically in his autobiography. He had gone to Dehra Dun by car with his friend Phil Singer, the noted American anthropologist. Phil halted at 13 Mohini Road to see Roy as the Swami stayed put in the car. Soon Roy came up and invited him for a cup of coffee "in a very pleasant melodious voice with great warmth in it".

In result, the swami depleted five cups of coffee and spent five hours with Roy, Ellen and Phil. He records that although he was a vegetarian by discipline he did not, could not, resist the excellent menu prepared by Ellen—cream, coffee, bacon, cheese, etc.—supplemented with drinks till "late, late in the night". He confesses candidly that it was the first time that he

enjoyed them; and analysing himself adds that they were "all the things I had been craving for in my subconscious". He further says ". . . But then I realised very largely I think under *Roy's unspoken influence* (italics mine) that I had been wrong all these years, wrong, that is, in ascribing any merit to my vegetarian diet".

As an Austrian, the unconventional Swami was conversant with "Count Bobby" jokes. He states in his tribute to Ellen Roy in the memorial volume that he could not bring them to the surface in the austere holy cities of Benaras and Hardwar. But he found scope to do so in the uninhibited surroundings of 13, Mohini Road; and he lightened the burden of serious conversation of Marxism, Hindu Philosophy, Anthropology etc. by interpolating storyettes about the degenerate Viennese which fluctuated from "kid stuff via risque to obscene and pathologically obscene" and comments that "the narrator must know his audience and judge which ones to present". Which ones he revealed and which he did not is anybody's guess. But he did find his listeners receptive, especially Ellen who was also a German. In result, the Swami who had stepped in for a flitting visit stayed for full two days. Agehananda became a welcome visitor to the home of the Roys. Whenever he was with them he stayed for "three or four days". In his opinion "if ever there was an elitist house in India—or for that matter anywhere else—it was 13 Mohini Road".

On such occasions Roy disposed off his desk work as quickly as he could so as to be with his friend. The twosome would indulge in their customary exchange of ideas on various subjects. Both had a lively sense of humour and in between their *tete-a-tetes* one overheard them laughing heartily at each other's sallies.

It did not take Agehananda long to understand Roy. He writes that Roy was "heterodox on all counts—as an Indian nationalist who despised nationalism, as a communist whose apostasy from communism put him to the blackest of black lists . . . But he had a deep love and reverence for the religious philosophers of India and he much admired my scholastic perception."

Agehananda also makes a revealing observation about Roy

when he says that Roy felt that the great Shankaracharya had been "a concealed materialist just as his medieval contemporaries had alleged that he was a crypto Buddhist".

Although Agehananda and Roy are both rationalists and humanists there is a significant point of departure in their thinking. Where Roy put an unambiguous stress on scientific methodology (which, of course, did not exclude empiricism) the emphatically empirical Swami is convinced that an authentic mystic experience is a decisive factor in developing the total personality of the individual—such individuals forming the bulk of society everywhere in the world.

Like Roy, Agehananda had one big advantage over Indian swamis many of whom are certainly erudite in Sanskrit but do not have even a nodding acquaintance with the philosophy of the West, leave aside its literature, history, anthropology and allied subjects . . . But even if the two friends worked on different postulates, they understood each other perfectly. The bond of their friendship rested on the impregnable rock of honesty of thought which has the search for truth as its highest imperative . . .

D. B. Karnik has narrated to me the following incident which, needless to say, I have transcribed in my own style:

Once Roy told Ellen that he expected Agehananda to join them at luncheon with two or three friends. Ellen prepared a sumptuous menu. But when she came out of the kitchen she was surprised to see only Agehananda with Roy.

"Why, Roy", she asked, "where are his friends?"

Roy, who knew what a great eater the Swami was, pointed at him mischievously and said: "They are all here already".

As Ellen looked at her husband reprimandingly, he quickly said: "You know, Ellen, I did not want the good name of our Annapurna to be scandalised. No one leaves 13 Mohini Road without satisfying his hunger and thirst fully".

Agehananda the man took the practical joke of Roy the Man in the right spirit and said: "It will be a shame to prove Roy wrong. Let us adjourn to the dining room; and, Ellen, I will see to it that my invisible friends and myself will do full justice to your excellent fare".

Roy is no more and I never met his friend. But I do wish that some day Swami Agehananda Bharati will find time to write a

monograph, if not a book, on Roy. It should make a fascinating reading, indeed. ■ ■ ■

27. Roy and Dick Park

Many an intellectual was initially drawn toward Roy because of his adventurous life and intellectual brilliance. One such was the scholarly Richard Park, a Ph.D. of Michigan University and Chief Director of Asia Foundation. He was in the army during the Second World War and was posted in Bengal for some time. He was so fascinated by what he saw that when the war was over, he decided to work on his pet subject in the light of his experience there.

When Roy was in Delhi Dr. Park came in contact with him and both soon became friends. Time permitting, he used to run up to Dehra Dun and stay with the Roys on week ends, sometimes for almost a week. A friendly spirit that Dick was, he soon became affable to all Royists. Already conversant with Roy's background and ideas it did not take much time for him to appreciate Roy's remarkable human qualities. In Dehra Dun the Roys looked after their friend's comforts; and in the peaceful surroundings of 13 Mohini Road, Dick and Roy would discourse on current topics and other subjects after their heart.

Dick considered the eerie of the Roys as his second home. He would personally improvise gadgets for Roy's comforts. It was he who had devised the electric connection between Roy's bedroom and the kitchen, and also that between the annexe and the bungalow. When the proposal for Roy's visit to the USA was mooted Dick took personal interest in chalking out the programme there and arranging for his lectures in American Universities.

Dick never came to Dehra Dun empty handed. He brought with him things like beef, chocolates, pork, jam etc. purchased by him in Delhi. Roy called this gesture their "Marshal Aid". In return, Dick had dubbed Roy "a secular Brahmin".

After Roy's death Dick kept his contact alive. It was he who had managed to secure a grant from Ford Foundation for the express purpose of building up the Roy Archive and he helped Ellen in every way he could. In his tribute to Ellen Roy he has

graphically described a typical day at 13 Mohini Road. His affection and admiration for the Roys oozes out in every sentence. As he has observed: "associates, admirers, old friends and foreign visitors arrived regularly and departed reluctantly".

When the news of Roy's first heart attack reached Delhi at about midnight, Dick immediately took out his car and along with Ram Singh, Vimal Prasad Jain and D. B. Karnik raced to Dehra Dun reaching there by about four o'clock in the morning. Dick was among those who kept vigil at Roy's bedside and stayed on for two or three days more after others had left.

It can well be said that once someone came to know Roy at close quarters he remained his lifelong friend. This was due more to the sterling qualities of Roy the Man than his intellectual attainments. ■ ■ ■

28. Roy and his comrades— V. B. Karnik and Vimlabai

Roy did not have rich businessmen and industrialists in his camp. They were all in the Indian National Congress. By and large the Royist group was composed of lower middle class and poor people with meagre or no bank balances. But they were rich in heart and had dedicated themselves totally to Roy and the cause he espoused. Hardly any one ever defected and few, who did go out of the fold, could be counted on one's finger tips. Nonetheless they remained Royists forever. I wonder if any other party can say that about itself.

Gandhiji sincerely but nonetheless shrewdly believed in identifying himself with the huge mass of Indian people. The Mahatma moved about in loin cloth, stayed in huts and travelled by the third class in trains. But fortunately he did not feel the sting of discomfort—not since 1916. He was always looked after by his devotees many of whom were rich Congressmen. As Sarojini Naidu is reported to have said once half humorously and half satirically: "It takes Birla's millions of rupees to keep Mahatma Gandhi poor".

I say this without malice. Because despite the fact that I ceased to be a Gandhian in 1937 I have held him in reverence.

Moreover, I sincerely believe that the least we can do for our national leaders is to keep them in comfort. They deserve it fully so that they may be in a position to fulfil their self-chosen task—whatever it be—in a most congenial atmosphere. It is another story in respect of those who overstep by virtue of their privileged position and start living in feudal pomp. How I wish Roy also had such facilities! But he had roused the wrath of other political parties and was depicted as the *bete noire* of Indian politics. During his six years in jail he had been cruelly treated as a second class political prisoner. And when he came out and joined the Indian National Congress he was devoid of monetary security and had to travel in crowded third class compartments with his devoted wife by his side. Deprived of creature comforts Roy and Ellen passed through great hardship between 1936 and 1939. And even afterwards it was not a bed of roses for them. Needless to say, they bore it philosophically and cheerfully.

Other political parties had their reserve funds. The Indian National Congress was the richest by a long margin. But the League of Radical Congressmen and the Radical Democratic Party of India which followed it in 1940 had not only no reserve funds but actually had to pursue their nationwide activities on shoe-string budgets.

To publish *Independent India* Weekly, Roy and Ellen and along with them V. B. Karnik and Vimalabai had sometimes to sacrifice their meals so that they could spend their meagre resources on buying the paper and paying the press bills.

By the way none of the other political journals has continued to come out regularly week after week and year after year for forty years as the *Independent India* Weekly and the *Radical Humanist* Weekly which was its new and apposite title on the founding of the Radical Humanist Movement in India. It is easily an all-time record of which the Royists may legitimately be proud. Even today the *Radical Humanist* monthly comes out regularly under the stewardship of V. M. Tarkunde.

With Roy setting the example, the Royists remained cheerful and unmindful of their monetary limitations. The band of Royists remained steadfast in the orbit of Royism with Roy as their Sun.

Sometimes I feel guilty that I could not do much more for

Roy than what I did. But of all the words the saddest are these: "It might have been . . ." ■ ■ ■

29. Roy and his comrades— at Empire Building

As stated already the Roys lived very frugally after Roy's release from jail. In those days they stayed in a small flat in Empire Building opposite Charni Road Station. The office of *Independent India* was also in the same place. The Karnik families and Maniben Kara were among their constant companions.

Once D. B. Karnik surprised Roy with a cheque of five hundred rupees being the first instalment of royalty of his book *Historical Role of Islam.*

Said D. B. "Now you can buy some new clothes for Ellen and yourself".

But Roy's instantaneous reply was: "No. D.B., new clothes can wait. Let us do first things first. Go and collect cash and bring as many comrades as possible here in the evening. We will celebrate the occasion all together".

"And then?" queried D.B.

"Then the second priority will be towards paying the arrears of bills for *Independent India* and the balance towards our personal needs".

So when the contingent turned up in the evening, they had a "riotous" time over beer, meat, vegetables and chapattis.

Whenever the Roys received some small amounts from the few advertisers in the weekly they beamed with joy. Roy used to visit a bar and restaurant in Princess Street, select some good wine and also purchase some cooked food. It included beef steak of which the Roys were particularly fond. They shared it with such comrades as turned up in the evening and made merry over their "sumptuous" dinners.

But there were days when they had little money in their coffers. Then Roy and Ellen would adjourn to a small Irani restaurant and have their fill at the "fabulous" cost of one rupee and eight annas per head.

And Roy's detractors who equated suffering with easy jail going said that he did not suffer for the cause. . . .

In a sense Roy did not suffer. He never gave a thought to his physical discomforts before his self-chosen mission in life. He never made a bravado of his martyrdom. ■ ■ ■

30. Roy and his comrades— marriage of Pathan Shetty

Anant Shetty who then belonged to the Revolutionary Group is popularly known as Pathan Shetty not only for his physique but also his big heart. He is one of the earliest Royists. When he married it was a quiet affair as he was also a poor man.

The Roys happened to be in Bombay and attended the modest wedding reception at Muzaffarbad Hall at the foot of Grant Road bridge. Roy invited the couple to their flat in Empire Building along with some comrades to dinner and drinks.

Then Roy went up to the cupboard rather mysteriously and took out a bottle which he displayed proudly.

"Do you know", he said "the other day when I had gone to the Princess Street bar I chanced to see this bottle of rare Rhine wine. It was stacked in a corner as a neglected commodity. But I knew its worth and purchased it at once. All these days I had preserved it for a fitting occasion and this evening is the fittest".

So saying he opened the bottle and depleted it in a number of glasses and cups in the absence of regular wine glasses and continued: "Now let us take a toast to the bride and bridegroom and wish them a long and happy life".

There were tears of joy not only in Pathan Shetty's eyes but also in those of others at Roy's gesture.

No one appreciated the Rhine wine half as much as Roy the connoisseur. He did not have the means to buy it regularly for his aesthetic pleasure. And yet he had treasured the bottle miserly so that one day he could share its contents with others.

We used to hold annual meetings on 25th January in memory of Roy at the Servants of India Society Hall on Prarthana Samaj Road. I remember the intensity of feeling on the

part of Pathan Shetty at one such meeting and as he paid a brief tribute to Roy and reminisced over his contact, his voice was choked with emotion and there were tears in his eyes. ■ ■ ■

31. Roy and his comrades— at Ratilal Mansion

In his concern for his comrades, Roy did not distinguish between the lowliest and those who were comparatively better off. Everyone merited his equal attention.

In the second half of the Thirties the rooms on the ground and first floors of Ratilal Mansion in Parikh Street, Girgaum, provided a haven for some homeless Royists.

In 1937, once when the Roys themselves had no means to live in a separate flat, they had put up in a room in V. B. Karnik's small apartment on the first floor.

One day Roy suddenly got up from his desk and raced downstairs. He wanted to find out for himself how his comrades lived. Roy moved on from one dingy room to another and talked to them individually, ascertained about some of their modest needs and promised to attend to it all personally and then again raced upstairs.

The group was visibly moved. They could not imagine how an internationally famous revolutionary who had moved about in pomp in the palatial residences in Moscow could find time to mingle with them individually and severally and show such deep concern for their welfare. No wonder the group cherished the memory of that visit with affection and pride. ■ ■ ■

32. Roy and his comrades— G. D. Parikh and Indutai

G. D. Parikh was one of the six Royists whom Roy had named as his "spiritual heirs" (*vide* Chapter on Roy and his Spiritual Heirs). Certainly the young Parikh, who was already Professor of Economics in Ruia College, was a man after Roy's heart.

Apart from intellectual affinity between the two, Parikh shared a lively sense of humour with him. He had the gift of bringing up relevant humorous anecdotes in the course of light conversation or serious discussion with equal ease and Roy enjoyed them whole-heartedly. Another Royist I knew who could do so with equal felicity was Ram Singh. Alas! both of them are dead and gone too soon.

Dr. Indumati Parikh his wife had told me that after a hectic lecture tour of Andhra in 1943 Parikh had gone to stay with the Roys in Dehra Dun. The climate and food in Andhra had proved too hot for Parikh. So when he reached Dehra Dun he had already gone down in health. Roy noticed it and immediately sent for Dr. Durga Prasad who advised complete rest, plain food and a course of injections. He purchased the injections and forced Parikh to take rest. In the midst of his activities Roy personally cooked nourishing food for Parikh and both Roy and Ellen looked after his comforts.

Parikh had somehow developed a nausea for eggs. Roy prepared different varieties of egg dishes without chillies and pungent spices. Soon Parikh came to relish them. Indutai said to me: "Imagine my surprise, Jamshed, when Goverdhan returned to Bombay and asked me to give him a boiled egg everyday at breakfast".

When Parikh was in Dehra Dun, Roy once found him struggling with the strap of his holdall. He got up from his desk, rushed up immediately, put his foot on the holdall and fixed the strap firmly. Parikh was very much touched by Roy's gesture and said to Indu: "I do not think any of our political leaders would have come forward so spontaneously to help a junior colleague like me".

As stated eleswhere it was Roy who had insisted that 'The People's Plan' should be drawn up by Parikh and Tarkunde and get it published in their joint names. Parikh had once said to me: "I do not think any other political leader would have ever thought of keeping his name out of such a prestigious draft".

In 1944 Ellen's father came to Dehra Dun to be with his daughter and son-in-law. The Roys insisted that the Parikhs should come and stay with them during his brief stay in Dehra Dun. When Ellen accompanied her father to Delhi to see him

return to the States, she left Roy in charge of the Parikhs. Indu has told me that it was the only time Ellen was away from Roy for 24 hours or so.

Once Roy the epicure desired to have a vegetarian dinner to be prepared by Indu in Maharashtrian style. "And don't forget to prepare *shrikhund*. I love it", Roy had added. Sugar was scarce in those days and Roy went personally to the store in the town and bought it.

"Do you know, Jamshed", Indu told me, "it was Roy who taught me to prepare non-vegetarian food with minimum of spices. And he also taught me to prepare some tasty Bengali sweets".

Roy was always anxious to give the sort of food which his visiting comrades liked—fish dishes for Tarakteertha Laxman Shastri Joshi, rice for Prem Natha Bazaz, spicy chips for Maniben Kara and "Machu Zola" for his Bengali friends.

Once Roy saw Parikh dressed in khaki. He was amused and said: "Look at your husband, Indu. Why, he is dressed like a Circle Inspector!" And he narrated a funny anecdote about a Circle Inspector he had once come across.

In 1940, Roy was in Poona for the Conference of the League of Radical Congressmen. A number of political detenus had just been released. They were all welcomed at a get-together held in the Poona Students Renaissance Club. Indu was the only girl member of the club. Roy insisted that she should take the chair.

"But I was so terrified", Indu told me. "I had never spoken in public and I was naturally hesitant to do so before so many intelligent comrades and especially Comrade Roy. But he would not listen to me and gave me the requisite courage. And that's how I came to deliver my maiden speech".

"After the meeting, tea and simple snacks were served", she continued, "but coming from a pucca Gandhian family I had never tasted tea. I served it to all others without taking a cup for myself. Roy noticed this and he immediately picked up a cup and gave it to me. I said: "But I do not drink tea. In fact have never done so".

Roy's reply was: "Then it is high time you did. Come on Indu, drink it. It will do you no harm. Besides as a good Royist you should not be that abstemious". "And so", I said, "you

had two firsts in one day. Your first speech and your first cup of tea". "Yes", she replied, "and it is due to Comrade Roy that I have become adept in tea drinking and speech-making".

In fact, it was Indu who was a Royist before Goverdhan joined the ranks. Both had fallen in love; and it did not require the acumen of Sherlock Holmes for Roy to discern it. Once he suddenly said: "Look here, you two. Why don't you get married?"

Indu has told me that both of them were taken by surprise and did not know what to say. But Laxman Shastri Joshi was also there and he butted in: "Don't you worry, Comrade Roy. They are soon going to get married and I am going to be the best man".

Roy quipped: "Then it is best that you hurry up".

These incidents may seem trivial. But they do bring out the finer side of Roy the Man. ■ ■ ■

33. Roy and his comrades— D. B. Karnik and Nirmala

D. B. Karnik is a restless soul. "Journalism is his forte" and has written quite a few books in Marathi on Roy and Royism, not to mention other subjects. He was the editor of *Maharashtra Times* and later on of *Nava Prabha* of Goa.

During the war years he had launched a Marathi daily called *Sangram* in Bombay. Its declared aim was to propagate the activities of the Radical Democratic Party of India which had gone by default in nationalist papers. But the venture proved abortive and D.B. had to close his one-man shop with heavy losses. At that time Roy wrote a touching letter from Dehra Dun:

". . . . . I know, D.B., you are in huge debts . . . worried and tormented. But do not think of jumping from the parapet of Marine Drive. You have worked for a cause and that is a great consolation. Ups and downs are a part of life. But life is for living—cheer up. . . . ."

Roy's letter reveals not only his concern for his comrade but also his healthy approach to life. He believed that work is its own reward and success and failure are just appendages of lesser significance.

During Roy's last illness, D.B. and his wife Nirmala were stationed in Delhi. They would often run up to Dehra Dun to be with the Roys. One morning when D.B. entered Roy's bedroom, he began to help him to get up. But Roy smiled faintly and said: "No. No, D.B. you should not work before you eat. Finish your chhota hajri first. I can afford to lie in bed till then".

Nirmala used to massage Roy's hands and comb his hair. Once during the severe winter Roy found her shivering. He said: "You are shivering, Nirmala. Warm your hands first and when you feel comfortable, attend to your chore".

In the evening he would often quip and tell Ellen: "Ellen, give Nirmala a drink. You know she relishes it like a true Royist".

These are just stray instances of Roy's concern for his comrades and friends even when he was seriously ill and knew that he was going to die soon. ■ ■ ■

34. Roy and his cats

It is not clear as to whether Roy had a liking for cats in his earlier years. But we know that he was drawn towards them by circumstances during his jail life in India. He has referred to them, *en passant*, in *Letters From Jail* and also in the preface to his *Memoirs of A Cat*. In fact, he could not have written it but for that serendipitous contact.

Be that as it may, the place was full of cats. The Roys loved and looked after them as if they were their children. One was called Muma, another Divali and a third one Totsy, possibly because it reminded Roy of Trotsky. Others were Snooty, Blackie, Tortoise and Reddie which was Roy's prime favourite. He had conferred the title of "Magnifico" on it. There is still a photo of Roy holding Reddie in his lap. The cats enjoyed full autonomy. They occupied chairs, tables, divans or snuggled by Roy's side as and when they liked. Roy used to refer to them as "the Brahmins of the animal world".

When the Roys attended to their chores in the gardens the cats would often follow them faithfully; and it seemed as if the felines were trying to fathom the activities of Roy and Ellen

and participate in them.

When lunch was ready Roy was wont to ringing the bell and announce: "Mankind and animalkind, lunch is served". And the cats would come running to the dining room from all sides. Ellen had earmarked separate plates for each one of them. By habit, each one knew where to reach for its food. When the fat ferocious looking Totsy entered with its studied stride Roy would say: "Here comes the bully. Look at his demeanour as if he is obliging us by his company".

D.B. has told me that once when he was in Dehra Dun, Muma was carrying and about to deliver. Roy and Ellen were excited over the impending event throughout the day. In between conversation Roy would suddenly call Muma or go to her and fondle her.

D.B. said: "Do you know, Jamshed, when we went for tea to a neighbouring bungalow Roy was all the while concerned about Muma. When we returned late in the evening Roy and Ellen had thoughts only for Muma. They kept awake till three or four in the morning beside her. Their anxiety was over only when Muma delivered her litter safely the next day. ■ ■ ■

35. Roy and "l'affaire Rs. 13,000/-"

In consonance with his anti-fascist convictions Roy mooted the idea of organising a labour front which would concentrate on production and free flow of materials so necessary for the successful prosecution of the Global War. It was under his inspiration that the Indian Federation Of Labour was founded in early 1942 under the dynamic leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

When Gandhiji gave the clarion call of "Do or Die" and started the "Quit India" movement in August 1942 Roy pointed out the utter futility of it all. Apart from his openly anti-fascist stance, he was also sure that, however laudable, the romantically conceived movement was bound to fizzle out sooner or later.

No less a redoubtable Congress personality than Shri C. Rajagopalachariar created a sensation by coming out in the open

against the suicidal tactics motivated hurriedly to embarass the ruling British Indian government. He dissociated himself from the "Quit India" movement courageously and in clear terms. At that time I released a letter to the Press suggesting that Rajaji and Roy should have a dialogue and come on a common platform so far as that issue was concerned. Coming from one like me the appeal naturally went unheeded.

But the British Indian Government did not wait to avail of the opportunity. It gave a grant of Rs. 13,000/- per month to I.F.L. in May 1942. It was for the specific purpose of furthering anti-fascist propaganda amongst labour and not toward its day to day expenditure. The organisational work was in charge of Roy. He was scrupulous enough not to use a single rupee out of the grant for the Radical Democratic Party of India.

Leave aside Indian Communists, Congressmen of all shades also resorted to vilifying Roy personally. They said he had sold his soul for "filthy lucre" and was rolling in wealth supposed to come from British Imperialists. They spread the canard that Roy was moving about in a posh Rolls Royce; whereas all that he had now was a junk of an old car purchased from his own meagre resources to enable him to go to the town from 13 Mohini Road. It was conveniently forgotton that Roy and Radical Democrats had started their anti-fascist activities two years earlier. In fact Roy had submitted his first resolution to support the War at the Poona Session of the A.I.C.C. in June 1940.

I had described the controversy as "L'Affaire Rs. 13,000/-". The amount was just a pittance to be spread all over India for its declared purpose. Most of it was spent in printing and pasting wall posters. Many Royists worked in their honorary capacity and the poorest among them received ten to twenty rupees a month to meet their out of pocket expenses. It was this band of freedom loving persons who were depicted as unpatriotic and selfish. But I need not elaborate "L'Affaire Rs. 13,000/-" here. Anyone who is interested will find a wealth of details and startling facts of the case in the booklet "Rs. 13,000/-.controversy X-Rayed" by V. B. Karnik who was the General Secretary of I.F.L. Suffice it here to quote its opening paragraphs which speak for themselves:

"Why is the nationalist press so full of slanderous attacks

and unworthy insinuations against the Indian Federation of Labour, the Radical Democratic Party of India and Com. Roy personally? The object is obvious. These organs of truth and non-violence do not desire that the public should consider dispassionately the views and opinions of Com. Roy and the organisations which he leads.

"If Roy produces a People's Plan Of Economic Development, based upon a revolutionary transformation of society, he does this as an agent of the Government! If he drafts a Constitution of Free India, calculated to ensure that political power will vest with the common man and not with the privileged few, he does this to serve British Imperialism! If he advocates the transfer of power to the exploited masses and not to the exploiting classes, he acts as the hired agent of a foreign power!"

It is an irony of history that the Indian National Congress tried to do in 1944-45 what Roy had advocated from 1940 onwards.

During all those years of storm and stress Roy remained unruffled and behaved in a most dignified manner rare in politics and absent in power politics. Not once did he think of emulating his opponents and indulge in character assassination of any one of them. All that he did was to write articles and books after books without a trace of rancour. He advised them not to make a sorry exhibition of what he called their "political bankruptcy".

I remember that when the Royists met at the Casa and the topic came up, a few of us were infuriated at the calumny hurled against Roy and suggested issuing equally scathing replies. But Roy advised them not to waste their time in any unfruitful activity and concentrate on their task constructively. If someone still felt depressed, it was Roy the Man who chased away his blues by laughter accompanied by his penchant to bring down any unpleasant topic from its "sublime" heights to its "ludicrous" low level and in result re-establish cheer and optimism.

I do not know who first said: "All is fair in love, war and politics." But if the cynicism is true, Roy the Man was a misfit in politics; especially as all politics had become power politics.

As to the propaganda carried on against Roy that he was

"rolling in wealth" I would relate here an incident which Professor B. M. Das Gupta (retired Vice-Chancellor of North Bengal University) has recorded in his illuminating book "M. N. Roy—Quest For Freedom". It should suffice to expose the utter maliciousness of his opponents.

Once Das Gupta (then a Professor and Dean in Lucknow University) was in Dehra Dun at the request of the U.P. Government to inspect the Doon School. On the last day he received a note from Roy: "Professor Das Gupta, have you forgotten we are here?—Roy". So he went to 13 Mohini Road in a tonga with his luggage. Roy and Ellen received him. The rest may better be told in the words of Das Guptaji himself: "I found that Roy was not looking at me but looking beyond me at his wife Ellen who, finding my luggage in the carriage, went to carry them on her back into a side room. I shouted, 'please don't. Call a servant'—reply was 'we have no servant'. I again said: 'call your cook'—again the reply was 'we have no cook'—again I shouted 'call your mali'—she replied 'we have a part-time mali only who comes in the morning'. I was completely out of my wits . . . I could easily see the poor condition in which they lived—only one meal a day and that almost 'kichdi'. I was very uneasy all the time . . ." ■ ■ ■

36. Roy and Indian Nationalists

As a nation smarting under the rule of a foreign government, it was but natural that all right thinking Indians should feel humiliated. Great Britain had declared war against Hitler's Germany and involved the Indian Empire in it without consulting the Indian Government. Even then Gandhiji was prepared to cooperate. The Congress ministries also did not come in the way of the war effort. But the British Government committed a *faux pas* when it refused the terms of the National Congress for co-operation.

The Royist group functioning inside the Congress as the League Of Radical Congressmen was also all for promoting the struggle for Indian freedom. But now they took a radical view of the world situation which had suddenly changed overnight, as it were. They maintained that the realisation of India's

political independence depended solely upon the victory of the democratic forces ranged against the fascist aggressions. They submitted that freedom had become indivisible. Hence India's freedom was willy nilly interlinked with the freedom of the world. A fascist victory would put the clock of history backwards. Whatever chances there were for India to become free were bound to be lost for good in the event of a fascist victory as it would usher in a new Dark age.

In Roy's opinion two wrongs could never make a right. It was wrong on the part of Great Britain to slight the legitimate aspirations of the Indian people as voiced by the Congress. But it was equally wrong for the Congress to do anything to facilitate a fascist victory. There was no meeting point between the two view-points and Roy founded the Radical Democratic Party of India in December 1940.

The Congress had already become a mass movement and the bulk of the people followed its policies and programme enthusiastically. Moreover Indian nationalists also took a vicarious pleasure in the ancient spiritualistic culture of India and its traditional way of life.

Since they could not easily throw the British Imperialists out of the country they proclaimed themselves as far, far superior to the British, nay, all Westerners, whom they stigmatised as sunk deep in their so-called "materialistic" culture. They equated their *amour propre* with political xenophobia. They subscribed to the dictum of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend". They extended their sympathy to Nazi Germany whose war machinery was making frightening inroads in the free countries of Europe dedicated to the values of democratic civilisation.

It is an open secret that during the Second World War years many well-meaning but nonetheless fuzzy wuzzy Indian Nationalists used to distribute sweets every time they received news of Hitler's army advancing on the Western Front. The fall of Paris had been hailed in such quarters with unconcealed joy. They were wistfully happy that every advance of the German army was a nail in the coffin of British Imperialism. They did not bother about the dire consequences of an ultimate Nazi victory. Nor were they worried that Hitler himself had disowned "the Indian Aryans" in *Mein Kampf* and denigrated them

as "hewers of wood" and "carriers of water". They felt proud that Hitler's flag was also a Swastika, be it in somewhat altered style.

Indian Communists, who were towing the Moscow line in the midst of the expedient Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and the USSR were more vociferous than their sworn political enemies, the Indian bourgeoisie.

As an avowed anti-fascist Roy did not miss any opportunity to expose what he called "this political bankruptcy" and "philosophical immaturity". He said that the attitude of the Indian National Congress in its legitimate fight for Indian freedom was in fact self-defeating and suicidal. Moreover, he was sure that Hitler would put aside the much admired pact as "a scrap of paper" and invade Russia sooner or later. He was most unhappy about the gradual erosion of the frontiers of the free world in whose survival alone lay the hope for India to achieve political independence. Nevertheless, he was among the very first to predict the ultimate victory of the Allied Forces even when one free country after another was falling a prey to Hitler's hordes.

At the time of the fall of Paris, Roy had come out with a highly moving article in *Independent India* Weekly under the pseudonym of Kautilya. The Jeremiad is a rare article in which Roy did not curb his emotions. It can be described as hi *cri-de-couer*. He shared the fear with other intellectuals of world repute that a total fascist victory would usher in a new century, if not centuries, of repression and reaction analogous to the Dark Age in Europe. During our discussions Roy would say with a heavy heart: "Sometimes I almost wish that Hitler succeeded in invading India. Such a misfortune alone would bring unthinking Indians to their senses. But then humanity will lose whatever freedoms it has won in the last three hundred years of history and that perspective is so frightening that I dare not entertain it even in my dreams." Roy knew that two wrongs never make a right.

Roy's basically democratic approach to the war was the bugbear of both the Indian National Congress and the Communist Party of India. They tried everything possible to hound him out of the arena of Indian politics.

Roy, of course, did not expect a better treatment from the

Communists who had exposed themselves as servile followers of the Moscow line, whatever it be for the time being. But he was certainly pained at the vile propaganda carried on by several Congress leaders who swore by moral values in politics from house tops. They accused him of being a stooge of British Imperialism, a bootlicker of the British, a traitor to India etc. Whereas he was as dead set against the continuance of the British colonial rule as anyone else in the Congress. In sooth, all his actions were motivated by the fact of facts that he did not want any foreign imperialism to replace the British. Why, he wanted the Indian people to be free not only from the yoke of foreigners but also their Indian counterpart.

I remember what Roy had said in one of his lectures in Bombay during the prosecution of the war. He said to the effect: "How do I become less of a patriot, how do I become less of a freedom fighter by supplying a spade to Mr. Winston Churchill, to dig the very grave of the British Empire which he had sworn never to liquidate? Did not Winston Churchill, the arch anti-communist, behave in the same way when he raised his hat to Stalin and while affirming his convictions as a democrat par excellence he welcomed the USSR as an ally in the prosecution of the global war of attrition ?"

He was sure that helping the British to win the war would open doors for India to win its independence. Nay, he was also sure of the ultimate victory of the Allied Forces (which included Russia) even at the time of the Quit India Movement when the spectre of defeat had raised its ugly head most ominously. But when his prediction came true he was the one man whose analysis of the war, not to mention his contribution to it, remained unrecognised. Indeed, the prophet at home is never honoured. But all that is another story.

Suffice to say here that Roy did not stoop low and imitate the tactics of his political opponents. He ignored his "martyrdom" and took it philosophically. That was Roy, the Man. ■ ■ ■

37. Roy and Congress Socialists

When Roy was in Russia he had managed to send a manifesto to the Ahmedabad Congress (1921) and another to Gaya (1922). It was in those documents of historical importance that the fundamental principles of Leftism and Rightism had been clearly formulated for the first time. It is a fact of history that they had greatly influenced the thinking of not only the Congressmen but also other political parties and intellectuals.

Of course, in the years to come Roy was to take a big step forward and maintain that in the light of the newly arisen concept of Welfare State under the pressure of circumstances the traditional meanings of Left and Right had lost their validity.

Roy had looked up to Congress Socialists to act as catalysts inside the parent organisation. But he was also critical of their functioning under the banner of socialism. In his prophetic "Letters to Congress Socialists" written in jail and smuggled out for dissemination he did not pull any punches. He submitted that so long as they were inside the Congress they should act as Congressmen and not socialists. That was the *raison d'etre* why he named his party "The League of Radical Congressmen" when he joined the Indian National Congress on his release from jail in 1936.

He asked them not to sail "under false colours"; and using Marxist dialectics drew their attention to the fact that "Congress" and "Socialism" were contradictions in terms. The laudable twin aims of the Congress were (a) to free India from the foreign yoke and (b) to bring about a bourgeois democratic revolution in the country. Under the given circumstances "nationalism" and "socialism" were mutually exclusive. And Roy the epistemologist exhorted Congress Socialists to do "first things first".

Even in the very first issue of *Independent India* Weekly Roy had said: "Political independence is not an end. It is the means to an end and which is the radical transformation of the Indian Society". He had warned that "Socialism is a still distant ideal" and that "the impending revolution will not abolish private property. Its task is to transfer the ownership of the means of production from one class to another. That is not

socialism".

But the elite group in the party failed to appreciate Roy's basic approach to Indian freedom. It was headed by no less a freedom fighter than Jayaprakash Narayan, as General Secretary. It is another story that in later years he was to come closer to Roy and Radical Humanists.

Here it may be pointed out that Nehru also thought on similar lines, *mutatis mutandis*. In his article on Jawaharlal Nehru published in the *Radical Humanist* Weekly of 4-11 May 1952 Roy has recorded that while Nehru did patronise the formation of a Socialist Party inside the Congress, he abstained from joining it. Here lay the point of departure between Roy and Nehru. Where Roy wanted Socialists to put aside their socialistic fervour once they were inside the Congress, Nehru's encouragement to Socialists only resulted in Roy's opinion, in "rationalising the racial animus of nationalism".

The most salient aim and object of socialism has been lost sight of by many of its vehement protagonists. It is not to distribute poverty by bringing down the level of the existing wealth of the nation. It lies in increasing the wealth of the country in all its spheres and all its classes. Roy's approach to socialism was saner and sounder. He maintained that socialism did not advocate sharing of poverty, misery and starvation, but a social order in which the entire people share plenty, happiness and good life. The choice is plainly between an economics of plenty and an economics of poverty. It is sad to reflect that so many of our Socialists enmeshed in the struggle for power have focussed their attention on the latter negative aspect.

Be that as it may, to Congress Socialists the practical and powerful centrists in the National Congress were nothing more than a group of "bourgeois reactionaries". When an enlightened leader like Shri Bhulabhai Desai gave an advertisement in the newly started *Independent India* Weekly, *Sangram Weekly*, organ of Congress Socialists came out with a rather scathing article and availing of a Biblical quotation stated that Roy had been bought over with "thirty pieces of silver". The author of that article was no less a zealous Socialist than Ashok Mehta.

Roy's comment was that he would not mind taking thirty

thousand pieces of silver openly if it helped him in furthering his cause. Was not the National Congress sustained by millions of rupees from the big business houses?

As to why the Congress Socialists went all out to demean Roy has remained an enigma of Indian politics. Because many of the leading lights of Congress Socialist Party were well qualified in economics and politics and believed in cultural freedom.

I happened to know some of them in Bombay; and I was simply baffled by their outburst against Roy, sometimes verging on hysteria. To say that they were haunted by Roy's past as a Communist will not do credit to their intelligence. Because Roy had already burnt his communist boats behind him in the Volga when he left Russia for good.

To say that their opposition to Roy, which was as rabid as that of the Indian Communists, was solely due to the hypnotic sway of the Mahatma over them is also an over simplification of the question. At least to me. As to how Yusuf Meherally, the voice of supreme sanity in their fold, would have behaved, will always remain a hypothesis. He died too soon.

In course of time, if not at a late hour, Minoo Masani came to realise what Roy had said all along, that socialist thinking in India had become outdated. And he was the first among the *avant garde* to resign from the Congress Socialist Party. Of course, he never fully agreed with the Royist line and has remained one of the few genuine Gandhians in the country, even if he does not wear khaddar.

Be that as it may, Congress Socialist Party's antagonism became more stubborn when the Radical Democrats aligned themselves openly with the democratic forces in Europe involved in the anti-fascist war. No wonder that when passions were running high, the spirit of nationalism had completely triumphed over the rationale of socialism.

It was only when the Radical Democratic Party of India was voluntarily dissolved and Roy decided to bid goodbye to active party politics that some of them had second thoughts and Roy attained a certain respectability in their eyes. Possibly it was due to the fact that Roy's courageous line of action had been vindicated by the victory of the Democratic Forces in the Global War of Attrition and India had gained political in-

dependence as he had all along predicted.

And when the change in the attitude of Congress Socialists came to pass Roy seemed to have forgotten everything about their erstwhile recalcitrance. When he had to refer to the injustice done to him he did so in a casual manner.

Here I remember how Homi Talyerkhan who belonged to the National Congress used to attack Roy in his column "Life As I See It" in the Parsee Gujarati newspaper, *Jame Jamshed.* I was always peeved and once even wrote a strongly worded letter in Roy's defence. When I spoke to Roy about it he just laughed and said: "You are wasting your time, Jamshed. In the life as Homi Talyerkhan sees it I have no place".

At such times it seemed to me that Roy was nearer to the typical Englishman prone to making understatements.

The first Russian Film Festival was held in Bombay in 1951. On the assurance given to me that the cultural function will steer clear of all politics, I had agreed to serve on its Committee as Vice-Chairman. That the assurance was not carried out is another story.

Justice M. C. Chagla had inaugurated it at the Regal Cinema on September 29, 1951. I had a chance to speak for a few minutes. While paying tribute to the artistic achievements of Russian masters of filmcraft like Eisenstein and Pudovkin, I did not hesitate to criticise the so-called Communist Theory of Socialist Realism which in my opinion was a hindrance in the way of Russian creative film makers. My speech was published in the *Current* Weekly of D. F. Karaka. It came to the notice of Minoo Masani. He invited me to be a founder member of the Indian Committee For Cultural Freedom which had been formed under his dynamic initiative. I joined it immediately. The ICCF was composed of many eminent Congressmen, Congress Socialists, independents and intellectuals. C. Rajagopalachari, Sampoornanandji, Bhaktavatsalam, Jayaprakash Narayan were associated with Minoo Masani. No less a personality than Kulapati Kanhaiyalal Munshi, the then Finance Minister of our Central Government, had specially flown from New Delhi to inaugurate it.

Soon thereafter, Minoo asked me if Roy would care to join us. I wrote a personal letter to him and pat came his reply in the affirmative. It was not in Roy to turn away from the cause

he believed in just because he had been done in the eye earlier. He considered the invectives hurled against him previously as "extraneous factors" which had no place in his decision to join ICCF.

But how much was Roy really sad in his heart of hearts at the constant and calculated attacks on his personality will never be fully known. Only Ellen has given us an inkling of it, just once and that was after Roy's death on January 25, 1954 in the article which she published in the *Radical Humanist* Weekly of March 4, 1954, and which I have referred to in the chapter on Tayeb Shaikh. She has poured her heart out in it. It is a threnody of purest ray serene as Ellen alone could have written. It has remained enshrined in the heart of every Royist. Just one brief and relevant extract will suffice here to reveal the normalcy and humanness of Roy the Man: "...If there was much hero worship and loyalty of good friends and comrades, there was also meanness and misrepresentation. And if he put up the face of a hardboiled man, which of course in a sense he was, I knew that it hurt and disgusted him often and me even more..." ■ ■ ■

38. Roy and J.P.'s Total Revolution

Total Revolution as envisaged by Jayprakash Narayan is generally described as Gandhian. But this is a half truth. There are many injunctions in total Gandhism which are no longer valid today. Those who want Gandhiji to remain installed on the pedestal of apostolate should not desecrate his memory by resorting to his name at every juncture. Why, if Gandhiji had been alive, he would have been the first to raise his voice in protest against opportunistic tactics of his so-called followers.

Total Revolution cannot be attained unless we are prepared to re-assess our cultural values in the light of new knowledge and apply it to our newly arisen needs. While retaining values of abiding nature in our heritage, we must also have the courage and honesty to weed out those which have become obsolete and are a hindrance to our experiencing what Roy called "A Twentieth Century Indian Renaissance".

Total Revolution cannot be achieved piecemeal. We must need work for, in the words of V. M. Tarkunde, "a simultaneous transformation of political, economic and social institutions on the basis of the new values which gain increasing ascendency among the people". J.P. himself has defined Total Revolution as a "combination of revolutions" in seven spheres namely, social, economic, political, cultural, intellectual, educational and spiritual.

Thus Total Revolution is a continual revolution as it has happened, for instance, in the USA. But whereas the processes of the continual revolution in the USA have been in the direction of the conservation of democratic values, in India we have yet to establish them firmly. Because, so far people have not grasped their importance, by and large due to historical circumstances.

Not that Gandhiji was not a humanist in essence. But the task transcends Gandhism with all its paraphernalia of religious injunctions which now and then overlap superstition.

Political education of the masses during the struggle of freedom consisted of protest movements only. It was hardly anything else in the post Independence era, till recently. And the movement of Total Revolution has yet to come out of the nebulous beginning. To become a reality, Total Revolution must needs be unreservedly secular. It is nearer to Radical Humanism than Gandhism and is co-eval with it. J.P. himself has equated it with social revolution. As such, it is a long term programme, *ipso facto.*

As Roy often said, first things must be done first; and the very first step is to make the people aware of the cherished values of the democratic way of life. It was Roy who always maintained that a philosophical revolution is the condition precedent to social revolution.

Not that it need be considered as phenomenal, but as it happened Roy was by far the first active politician in India, if not the world, to develop the concept of Total Revolution and advocate the formation of People's Committees. He has dealt with the subject exhaustively in his writings and enunciated it in the 22 Theses of Radical Humanism and more concretely in his Draft Constitution of A Free India.

In fact, it was as back as in 1920 that Roy had envisaged the

necessity of forming People's Committees at village level in his memorable book *India In Transition.* Gandhiji had also suggested the formation of Gram Panchayats. But he had stopped short. He did not advocate their effective participation in affairs of the State. Whereas Roy submitted that if People's Committees were to be effective, they should have a voice in the administration of the State. Such direct participation of the people alone could make parliamentary democracy meaningful and not a mere formality.

In J.P.'s writings (vide his *Prison Diary*, for instance) we find echoes of Roy's ideas which seems to have influenced him as much as those of Gandhiji. For example, when he writes: "In our heritage there are many things that are noble and valuable; they have to be preserved and strengthened. But we have also inherited a great deal of superstition and wrong values and unjust human social relations", he is more in line with Roy's thinking.

When J.P. censors the caste system among the Hindus, he is not only in accord with Gandhiji and Roy but also innumerable intellectuals and social reformers of the past and present times.

But when he says that "the main difficulty in understanding the Gita is purely semantic", he is in full agreement with Gandhiji not to mention other well meaning religious apologists.

How near to Roy J.P. had come can be well judged from the appeal he issued on January 29, 1978 and in which he states: "M. N. Roy was a philosopher-revolutionary of great originality" and after dwelling briefly but nonetheless succinctly on Roy's ideas he ends his appeal saying: "It is highly desirable that these ideas should be further developed and propagated among the people. I appeal to the people and the Government to extend all possible help to the M. N. Roy Institute. . . ."

It is an irony that our "free press" which never lost an opportunity to flash the statements of J.P. has by and large ignored publishing the said statement even in small types.

The 22 Theses referred to above are an attempt to clarify the *raison d'etre* of Radical Humanism. They have a relevance to the programme of Total Revolution.

Thesis 15 states: " . . . man is the maker of his world—man as

thinking being, and he alone can be so only as an individual . . . An increasingly large number of men, conscious of their creative power, . . . can create the conditions under which democracy will be possible".

Thesis 16 will bear quoting *in extense*: "The method and programme of social revolution must be based on a re-assertion of the basic principle of social progress. A social renaissance can come only through determined and widespread endeavour to educate the people as regards the principles of freedom and rational co-operative living. The people will be organised into effective democratic bodies to build up the socio-political foundation of the post-revolutionary order. Social revolution required, in rapidly increasing number, men of the new renaissance, and a rapidly expending system of People's Committees, and an organic co-ordination of both. The programme of revolution will similarly be based on the principles of freedom, reason and social harmony. It will mean elimination of every form of monopoly and vested interest in the regulation of social life".

The formation and functioning of People's Committees at village level and at street level in cities is an essential part of Total Revolution. But we should be careful not to put the cart before the horse. Our primary task is to make the people aware of the cherished values of the democratic way of life. It is something much more than merely helping them. It is teaching the people that if they really want to be emancipated they must learn to help themselves.

If the idea of Total Revolution is appropriated by political parties of all shades, it will defeat its purpose. Because every party will have its political axe to grind. Party politics cannot but resort to one kind of class conflict or another to succeed at the polls. This is a negation of democracy. Democracy is greater than its political systems which in the final analysis are bound to be circumscribed by their penchants. And the penchant of penchants common to all party politics is to capture power and remain in power by hook or by crook.

Of course, the co-operation of the government for-the-time-being in power is desirable and definitely needed. But no government should try to dominate the people in their effort on whatever level it be, so long as it is peaceful and non-violent. Hence any politicisation of Total Revolution by any

party or government will be its death knell.

That is the stark reality we have to face and overcome.

The reader will be justified in asking what has all this to do with my "Royana". I would just give a two-fold reply in my defence. One: that the idea of Total Revolution now mooted by J.P. has captured the imagination of all politicians and intellectuals and many of them are keen to jump on the band wagon and make hay while the sun shines. Two: that whereas the total output of Roy's writings reflect the deep learning of Roy the intellectual the spirit behind it reveals the personality of Roy the Man.

Where Gandhiji was a preacher, Roy was a teacher; and he also believed in practising what he taught. When he recommended the Royists to go outside the pale of party politics, he also gave freedom to those who were not in favour to carry on without him. And when the dissolution took place he wished the dissidents well and did not grudge them freedom to join any other political party of their choice which they considered to be in consonance with the principles of Radical Humanism.

Knowing that history does not stop at a given point, he always kept an open mind. Knowing that ideas go on evolving continually, he exhorted his followers, Buddha-like, not to take his word as Sacrosanct. Roy the Man wanted the Royists to go a step ahead of him, not only after his death but also when he was alive. In the words of J.P.: Roy "was perhaps never more wanted than just when he went away". ■ ■ ■

39. A Unique Dissolution

When the first elections took place after the end of the global war in 1945-46 the Radical Democratic Party of India had put up a hundred candidates. But the party was hopelessly routed at the polls. Only one candidate Jaipal Singh, a tribal leader got elected and he, too, succeeded as an Independent who had approved of the Radical Democrat Party's Manifesto. It was a crippling blow to the prestige of the party.

It is a fact that in many places Radical Democratic Party candidates were belaboured and few were actually done away with by the goonda elements working for opposition parties. The

harrowing story need not be detailed here. But it is relevant to point out two major reasons for the decisive defeat. One was the utter lack of money power. The other reason was more telling. The electorate was more or less divided into two groups, namely, those who stood for the Congress and those who were motivated on communal lines. The third and rational alternative offered by Radical Democratic Party went by default with passions running high everywhere. The electoral scales had naturally tilted on the side of National Congress. The magnetic sway of Mahatma Gandhi and the charismatic leadership of many Congress luminaries (who had also captured the imagination of the masses by dint of their ceaseless opposition to the foreign rule and courting jail over a period of 35 years at least) won the day. Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Jagjivan Ram, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and many others were like so many shining stars in the firmament of Indian politics. In comparison, the light shed by Roy and the Royists was like that of a single torch which lost its lustre against the blinding glare of innumerable lighthouses directing the course of Indian humanity voyaging on the high seas of politics to its desired destination.

Roy, of course, had not expected a majority of his candidates to succeed. I distinctly remember what he had told us more than once: "If only eight or ten of our friends were to find their feet planted in New Delhi I will feel satisfied".

So when after the debacle, the Royist coterie was once again with us at the Casa, we were a lot of frustrated persons, one and all. As usual we held a post mortem in an atmosphere of despondency. But the lion-hearted Roy soon dispelled the dark clouds by diverting attention to the lighter side of our castastrophe. He began stressing the element of the ludicrous in our naive experiences cracking jokes against individuals and himself. Soon there was gaiety once again in Casa da Vinci and we all drowned our erstwhile sorrows in a free flow of Scotch and Rhine wines.

Roy declared that instead of losing heart we should learn our lessons from the defeat and apply ourselves to our task afresh. After all, the cause to which we had dedicated ourselves had not died with our defeat. His resoluteness and optimism elec-

trified us all and suddenly we found regaining confidence in ourselves. The situation reminded me of the Fallen Angel's exhortation in his speech before his followers in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. "What though the field be lost? All is not lost".

Roy was by far the first in India to advocate partyless politics; and he was aware that it was a far off cry *vis-a-vis* real politics. Under the given political conditions it was not only impossible in India but also anywhere else in the world. As for the "people's democracies" which eulogised themselves as shining examples of partyless politics Roy knew at first hand what a sham they all were. The clay feet of their gods had already been exposed in the wake of their assuming power and betraying their ideal in practice.

In course of time Roy re-assessed the situation in the light of *voluntary dissolution of the Radical Democratic Party of India*. His argument was: that if as Radical Democrats we wanted to remain true to our aims and objects we should realise that we had no place in the sphere of active party politics. All politics had become power politics; and since we were bound to be a minority of conscious reformers fighting against Establishment, we should understand that ours was a long term programme *ipso facto*. It was incumbent on us to cultivate the virtue of patience. Social emancipation was not a fruit which would fall in the lap like, say, political power in the wake of a historical accident. Hence the only alternative open was to gather courage and dissolve the party and transform it into a movement of educative value. It heralded the official berth of New Humanism.

Roy's thesis was more revolutionary than his most revolutionary statements and actions. It literally stunned the Royists in the beginning stage of discussions, at least. Naturally, there were two opinions. Many were against foreswearing all interest in active party politics after having spent one's lifetime in it. I was one of them.

At one stage Roy actually suggested that those who desired the continuance of the party were free to do so and that he would willingly step out of its proposed activities rather than remain within and become the cause of friction. This did not mean that Roy had lost interest in his dissenting comrades. D. B. Karnik has told me that once when he had broached the sub-

ject, Roy had said: "Do you know, D.B., I have played with the lives of my comrades so far in the hope that we would succeed in our aims on a modest scale, at least. But now that I have realised that it is not possible within the ambit of active party politics, I do not desire to do so any more. I would rather leave them free to decide on their future course as they think best. If we sincerely believe in the freedom of the individual in society we should first put our belief into practice among our own comrades. Besides, once the Radical Democratic Party is dissolved they will not be bound by its discipline any longer".

Roy had defined freedom as "the progressive removal of all restrictions from the unfolding of human potentialities". The above incident is just one more proof of Roy's will to remain true to his ideal.

So when the Radical Humanist Movement was launched most of us (and that included me) veered round to Roy's point of view. Those who decided otherwise remained Royists nonetheless.

It can be said that the ushering in of the philosophy of New Humanism was a triumph for Roy, the Man over Roy, the politician. ■ ■ ■

40. Roy and August Fifteenth

August 15 had a special significance for Roy ever since he had first met Ellen in Europe. It was her birthday. By sheer historical coincidence his book *New Humanism* was also released on August 15, 1947 which saw the birth of our Independence Day. Perhaps it was the only holiday which the Roys took without a break. All serious work for the day was suspended and Roy celebrated it with unabashed eclat.

When in Dehra Dun, Roy would cook the meals personally and also prepare a special cocktail for the occasion. It was mixed in a very big glass bowl with meticulous care befitting a professional blender of wines. We called it "Roy's Cocktail" and it was delicious and enchanting. The ice would be stacked around the bowl so that the cocktail could be chilled without icewater in it.

In the evening comrades, friends and guests would gather around on the verandah with the Roys, raise the customary toast to Ellen and enjoy the drink to their heart's content over sparkling conversation. Roy would have liked to supplement it with Scotch and European wines. But contrary to all the vile propaganda Roy's bank balance was nothing to write home about and for some sentimental reason he did not relish accepting any liquor from his invitees on this particular day.

The cocktail was inexhaustible like the bowl of Narsi Mehta blessed by Shree Krishna. The revelry would continue late after dinner time and the assembly would rise and sing "She is a jolly good fellow" the only time one heard Roy singing aloud. Throughout the day and night Roy remained carefree and opportunity permitting, entertained the company with anecdotes and historical episodes narrated in a lighter vein.

In Dehra Dun, Dr. Durga Prasad, the Doon School teachers John Martin and Jack Gibson, Rani of Barabari, Mrs. Uttam Singh (an Austrian lady) were some of the constant guests. So also comrades like S. N. Puri, Dr. R. M. Paul, Prof. R. L. Nigam. Some comrades would run up from Delhi Sahranpur and other comparatively nearby places like Ram Singh (of *Thought* Weekly), A. K. Mukerjee, Bimal Prasad Jain, Girilal Jain, Vatsayana, Mr. and Mrs. S. K. Dey, Dr. B. N. Das Gupta *et al.* When important personalities like Dr. Dick Park and Swami Agehananda were in Dehra Dun they participated in the celebration. The list naturally varied from year to year. Those who overstayed were accommodated on the first floor of the Library Building in guest rooms. Both Ellen and Roy would pop in at bedtime and ascertain if everyone was comfortably perched in bed with mattresses, pillows and covers. The Royists were like members of a well knit family with Roy verily in the role of a *Pitamaha* of the Sanskrit scriptures.

Roy and Ellen were an ideal couple with a world of understanding between them. Once in a way when Ellen fell ill Roy put aside all his work and remained at her bedside for hours on end.

In turn, the self-effacing Ellen was wife, companion, mother and nurse to Roy. It was in June 1952 that Roy while walking with Ellen in Mussourie slipped suddenly and fell down some fifty feet. Ellen rushed down to him and with the help of others

brought him up on a stretcher. His fractured bones were healed in course of time, but he had developed cerebral thrombosis from which he never recovered fully.

During his last illness Ellen looked after him day and night unmindful of her health. Side by side, she took upon herself the responsibility of running *The Radical Humanist* Weekly and all correspondence. When Roy told her not to exert herself, she replied with a smile on her face: "Don't you underestimate my energy, Roy". Certainly, if the Weekly and the Movement did not go under, it was mainly due to Ellen's inspired zeal and dedication. ■ ■ ■

41. Roy and his comrades at Dehra Dun during his last illness

The relationship between Roy and his comrades was ideal. Roy, who was not overtly sentimental, held them in affection—affection which he exhibited as if in passing and often in a prosaic manner. But as I have said Roy was nonetheless their *paterfamilias*. It was surprising that not only did he know almost everyone of them by name but also remembered when and how he had met them first.

During his last illness when Roy did not have adequate money for medicines and treatment, small amounts of five and ten rupees trickled from the Royists from all over India. In the midst of her worries Ellen acknowledged every single letter and remittance. The Roys were deeply moved by this overflow of sympathy. When Ellen could not place a donor she would ask Roy about him and Roy would know. Sometimes when he suddenly remembered something from his sick bed Roy would say: "Do you know, Ellen, this is the man who had come to see us and presented a hold-all to us".

And then he chuckled and added: "It was not a hold-all. It was a veritable tank".

Another time he pointed out to Ellen: "Why, Ellen, this is from the man who had seen us once in Bombay. He stayed somewhere near the Crawford Market and brought us a basketful of Alphonso mangoes on the Bombay Central Sta-

tion. We ate quite a few of them with relish en route to Dehra Dun".

"Yes" Ellen rejoined, "and you had also passed them on to those who were with us in the compartment".

Once Ellen asked him: "Do you know who this comrade from Guntur is? He has sent us twenty rupees but forgotten to give his address". And Roy replied: "Of course, he is the man who came on the Begum Pet Station with a bag of rice from his farm. His features were thickset and he wore dark glasses".

Indu Tai has told me that once Ellen received a money order of five rupees only from Poona with the sender's name missing in the M.O. form. Roy said at once: "It can only be from that poor man, the peon, who used to attend my lectures and followed me everywhere in Poona". And so it was. Roy was lion-hearted. He never forgot anyone who had done him the slightest favour. ■ ■ ■

42. Roy's last illness—a touching incident

Roy, who had somewhat recovered, was looking forward to celebrate Ellen's birthday with customary eclat. But on August 15, 1953 he had the second attack of cerebral thrombosis. Said Ellen in a choked voice: "This is my birthday present!"

Roy's health continued deteriorating and he never recovered.

A year earlier, preparations had been made for him to visit the USA for treatment. While in the States he was also to deliver lectures at some universities and other organisations. But there was an inordinate delay in obtaining passports and visas and the plan remained unfulfilled, perforce.

Everyone who knew Roy intimately was worried about his failing health. Royists hoped against hope that the man of phenomenal will power will come out of the crisis somehow or other. Dr. Durga Prasad, whose affection for Roy was second to none, was by his side twice a day.

But Roy's resources were limited. Ellen could not place orders for costly medicines and injections many of which were

not available in Dehra Dun. And he was too stoical to ask for favours.

Jayprakash Narayan's earlier opposition to Roy had died a natural death by the time the Congress Socialist Party had decided to go out of the parent body in 1948. He joined the Sarvodaya Movement of Vinoba Bhave about the time Roy had decided to dissolve the Radical Democratic Party—J. P. had come to realise what Roy had said years before that the National Congress in Government could not but become involved in the rat race of power politics. By a curious coincidence both had abjured active party politics, more or less simultaneously.

J.P. came to see Roy at 13 Mohini Road sometime in 1953. He was shocked and saddened to find Roy's "large and powerful frame lying in bed". J.P. had written an article after Roy's death which was to be published in a memorial volume but it never saw the light of the day. It has now been published for the first time in *The Radical Humanist* of March 1978. In that moving "Anjali" J.P. has said: "I cannot describe the sense of tragedy that overtook me when I had gone to talk with Roy about non-party democracy, in which I was becoming deeply interested and about which he had done more thinking than anyone in this country *or for that matter in any country* (italics mine) and found him stricken down with paralysis".

J.P. was further shocked to find that Roy did not receive the best of medical aid he deserved. When he returned to Delhi he drew the attention of President Rajendra Prasad to the neglect of Roy. Babuji in turn passed the information on to Prime Minister Nehru. In keeping with his impulsiveness Nehru was upset and furious that no one had put him wise earlier. He issued instructions to M. O. Mathai, his personal Secretary to rush to Dehra Dun and see that nothing was left undone for Roy's treatment.

It should be recorded here that Nehru was favourably drawn towards Roy in the beginning. He had met Roy for the first time in 1929 when he was in Moscow. When Roy landed in Karachi incognito in 1930, Nehru who was attending the Karachi Session received and shielded him. When Roy was arrested soon thereafter Nehru became an active member of the M. N. Roy Defence Committee. When he was released from jail in 1936 it was again Nehru who invited him to stay with him in

Allahabad to recoup his health. He was again one of the two or three Congress leaders to send a congratulatory message to Roy in the very first issue of The *Independent India* Weekly. Whereas the Mahatma just sent a postcard advising Roy to render "mute service to the cause".

Then when Nehru went on an official visit to the Doon Military Academy on December 12, 1953 he snatched time to be with Roy. R. L. Nigam was also there. It was, indeed, a momentous meeting as two world personalities faced each other. Roy was already feeble and greeted Nehru with a quip: "I am sorry" he said "that I have to play Mussadiq to receive you in sick bed".

Nehru smiled and said: "I know it is not a habit with you". Before leaving Nehru said: "Roy, I really want you to get well soon. We have much work to do together when you get well".

Then Nehru held Roy's hand in his for a minute or so in silence. Nobody will know what thoughts raced through their giant minds in that interval of time—timelessness. But it was a noble gesture on Nehru's part to come all the way to be with Roy again after a lapse of many, many years. The demon of politics had cast a spell on them both and the irony of history had separated them in a water-tight compartment, as it were.

If only Roy had recovered and the two had met once again in more favourable atmosphere. . . .

But, alas, it was too late. Roy's thrombosis began to reach its most crucial stage at a galloping pace and Roy succumbed to the onslaught at 11.50 p.m. on January 25, 1954.

Next morning all India celebrated the Republic Day with usual eclat. And the man who had spent his entire life in the cause of India's freedom, which in his universality he had considered to be inseparable from world freedom, was cremated in a strictly secular manner and without fanfare. In the midst of national jubilation the Royists in India, nay, all over the world, mourned their irreparable loss with stoic courage as Roy himself had wished.

Roy's sincere friends and colleagues all over India and abroad sent their messages of condolence to Ellen and paid tributes to the one whom they had known as one of the greatest men of the century.

Even those who had kept themselves sedulously away from

Roy and his activities also became vocal now and sent their messages. Even those newspapers which had ignored Roy in his lifetime published leaders and articles in his eulogy.

But where were they when Roy needed their co-operation the most?

It needs to be recorded here that Nehru personally bore all the expenses of Roy's treatment and Babu Rajendra Prasad sent him two hundred rupees a month from his personal account not only for the rest of the days Roy was on earth but also to Ellen afterwards.

Roy's *samadhi* is in the front garden of 13 Mohini Road. It is surrounded by a framework of steel pipes over which the creeper Visteria runs. About and around the site splendid *shisham* trees stand as sentinels and variegated roses in beds and pots waft with the wind and spread their fragrance over the modest memorial. The *samadhi* was designed by Ellen personally. She used to sit beside in silent meditation. D.B. has told me: "When after Roy's death some of us were in Dehra Dun, we would be with Ellen till midnight and then retire. Once I got up at 3 o'clock in the morning and looked out of my window. What did I see, Jamshed? Ellen was sitting at the *samadhi* which was dimly illumined by a lamp. I stirred out automatically and sat in silence beside her. When she saw me, tears trickled down her cheeks and it seemed to me that she did not desire to stop their flow. They were, indeed, her last solace. . ."

And when Ellen was dastardly assassinated on December 13, 1960 we brought her ashes and buried them next to Roy's. Thus the Inseparables in life also remained inseparable in death. ■ ■ ■

43. Roy and gardening

During his jail life Roy's one pastime was to observe the growth of flowers and plants around him. The pleasure which he derived from watching the sprouting of flowers from day to day made him forget his discomforts within the four walls of his cell.

In one of the letters to Ellen when he was in the Cawnpore

District Jail he writes: "This year I have bright yellow flowers in the small yard in front of my cell" and he regrets that he could not send them on to Ellen in Europe. At another place he says in a lighter vein: "Here I am the Monarch Of All I Survey. I enjoy the sovereignty though it extends over such a tiny domain. I have had some flowers planted along the wall of my kingdom". When he realised that the flowers were bound to wither and die soon he suddenly lapses into metaphysics and asks poetically: "Do they have souls? I ask them but they don't answer". Still later on when he was in the Dehra Dun District Jail he writes to Ellen: "A crop of *my* (italics mine) flowers—the red, purple and lavender ones—is dying. But the next one is almost ready to follow. This time the flowers will be yellow—marigold. After them will come—what do you guess?—Chrysanthemums? All in my tiny box—on the narrow strip of ground along the foot of its outer shell".

Both Roy and Ellen were extremely fond of gardening. We had small but neatly arranged gardens and lawns at the Casa both in the front and the rear. During the years of the Global War the Air Force personnel were put up in extensive barracks at Worli. Now and then some of them would turn up at the Casa and capture the beauty of the flowers and foliage in their cameras.

It was our privilege and pleasure to have the Roys stay with us every time they came to Bombay. Whenever they could snatch some time they would go round the gardens with Hilla and take open delight in our "flower show". Roy and Ellen would drop gentle hints to Hilla how to improve upon their blossoming against the windy saline atmosphere of the Arabian Sea coast in Worli locality.

Ellen's knowledge of horticulture was certainly of a very high order. It would have done credit to a professional. But Roy's interest was also not just superficial. He revealed a first-hand knowledge of the subject. How and when he found time to acquire that knowledge was again his secret. One thing is certain. He was a rapid reader and had a photographic memory.

When Roy selected 13 Mohini Road, Dehra Dun for his *sanctum sanctorum* the bungalow was in a dilapidated condition and its surroundings were a veritable jungle. But under the

personal care of the Roys the site was soon transformed into a habitable place with a lovely garden and an orchard.

On rare occasions when I was with the Roys in Dehra Dun, I would accompany them in their customary look-over and watch them affectionately tending the azelias, krishna kunj, bougenvellias, hibiscus, begonias and multi-coloured roses in flower pots and beds.

The canal water used to be released at odd hours and more often at night. Roy and Ellen would then stir out of bed in the dead of the night to channelise the water. Sometimes it took the better part of the night for them to finish their self-imposed task.

D. B. Karnik who was then stationed in Delhi as a journalist would be often with them during weekends. He has told me that Ellen guarded the efflorescence like a jealous sentinel. Except for Roy, she would not allow anyone else to pluck the flowers or fruits. Flowers bloomed also on the creepers which had to be clipped so as to prevent their inordinate growth.

But when Roy fell ill Ellen changed the tactics. She allowed the creepers to grow so that "Now Roy can see the flowers from his sick bed" and knowing his attachment to flowers she added: "Now Roy can enjoy the fragrance from his bed without straining himself". It was a touching sight—heart rending——when on the morning of January 26, 1954 (our Republic Day) and a few hours after Roy's death, Ellen plucked all the roses in the garden with moist eyes to place them on Roy's cortege.

"What are these flowers now for?", she said, "They used to give such joy to Roy! And he is no longer there to play with them, with his tenderness and affection. . . ."

When Roy's mortal remains were to be carried on their last journey, Ellen gave him her farewell kiss and placed a rose on his chest.

The philosopher of Dehra Dun and the philosopher of Ferney had many things in common, one of them was this—both the giant intellectuals were also in tune with nature.

Here I may be permitted to state something personal. When Roy fell ill, Hilla and I invited him to come to Bombay for the best treatment available in the city. But he thought otherwise. D.B. who was in Dehra Dun then has told me what Roy had

said when the question of his going to Bombay was mooted.

"Of course, there is no problem at all about accommodation in Bombay. Hilla and Jamshed would willingly place the entire floor at our disposal and look after me in every way. But I do not feel like putting so much of burden on them. Why, we have always availed of their hospitality once every year, at least".

I mention the above, in all humility and with sadness that I did not know the motive behind Roy's hesitancy in time. ■ ■ ■

44. Some charges against Roy

(a) Was Roy impatient?

I have described Roy as a patient man. In essence it is true. But it would not be correct to say that he never lost patience. Which man has not? But his bouts of impatience were rather in the nature of exception to the rule.

When somebody submitted a point of view which he thought was fallacious he tried to reason it out. But when such a person continued harping on it Roy was known to become impatient. And then, he was also known to come out of it soon. It was evident that his anger was not so much directed against a person submitting an idea, but the ideas itself with which he found fault.

I remember how he had once lost patience with me when I was in Dehra Dun and continued sticking to a point of view. Roy had got up from his chair in anger and moved a few feet away from me. I was crestfallen. But he had soon returned to me and expounded the given issue coolly as if he was a teacher coaching up his pupil.

I do not think any Royist held this normal human weakness against him for the simple reason that the overall image of Roy in their eyes was that of an effable man, sincere friend and understanding teacher.

Professor B. N. Das Gupta (retired Vice-Chancellor of North Bengal University) has also candidly referred to Roy's impatience in his book *M. N. Roy—Quest For Freedom.*

In 1943, Roy had once invited Prof. B. N. Das Gupta to his

residence in Lucknow along with Prof. N. K. Sidhant, Dr. K. L. Ganguly, Prof. Dhurjati Prasad Mukherjee and the wellknown lawyer Upen Sen. At tea Das Gupta, as spokesman of the group said: "...at this stage Congress should take over the power from the British...later on the people should take power from the Congress if the latter does not behave as people's government".

Roy became uneasy and flared up suddenly: "Professor Das Gupta, history belies it...you are not a student of history—let Dhurjati Babu say if history will confirm your view..."

Roy's loss of temper came as a shock to his listeners. But he soon calmed down and the discussion was resumed. In its course Roy said that once the power is captured by the Congress we might have to wait for fifty years to have a genuine people's government.

On another occasion Upen Sen had hosted a dinner. There was some discussion on a proposed agrarian legislation at the dinner table. Das Gupta found Roy shouting suddenly: "If such a legislation becomes a matter of expediency it is better to break up the party. *I hate expediency* (italics mine). It must be our conviction".

Confusion prevailed and Ellen tried her best to pacify Roy. I am sure she must have given a curtain lecture to Roy after the dinner party was over.

Das Gupta writes: "Roy was usually nice, pleasant and courteous; but once *his feelings* (italics mine) were hurt he never hesitated to show his temper". The understanding Vice-Chancellor is charitable enough to add: "This is just what a leader should do".

A sincere man with normal failings is more loveable than the paragon of a saint. As I have stated above, Roy's infrequent outbursts were not directed against persons with whom he was engaged in discussion but the ideas which outraged his feelings. Certainly, they acted as a psychological safety valve in him whose phenomenal storage of knowledge was as much his strength as his weakness.

Be that as it may, but knowing that history does not stop at any given point, he always kept an open mind. Knowing that ideas go on evolving, he exhorted his followers, Buddha-like, not to take his word as sacrosanct. Roy, the Man wanted the

Royists to go one step ahead of him, not only when he was dead but also when was alive.

(b) Was Roy arrogant?

Even some of his admirers and colleagues like Philip Spratt in India and Borodin and others in Russia found Roy to be arrogant. Certainly they had come in closer professional contact with him and must have had reason to say so.

For one thing Roy had many opportunities to enter into intellectual dissertations with them all. At times such exchanges of thought could not have but developed into "confrontations"—understandable clashes between more or less equally knowledgeable personalities. I say "more or less" purposely. Because no one in my ken came up to the level of Roy in the vast storage of knowledge on a variety of subjects. Nor did anyone else have the good fortune to match his experiences. This was the result of his active involvement in the political upheavals in several countries.

In sooth, Roy's "good fortune" was as much of an asset as a handicap to him. Roy has said in his *Memoirs* that when Lenin met him first in Moscow he had expected to see an elderly and bearded man. And then it was the pioneer Marxist-Communist himself who had elevated Roy's stature immensely by submitting his own thesis on the Colonial Liberation Movement along with that of Roy in the Second Congress of the Third International in 1920—an event without parallel in the annals of the history of Kremlin.

Roy occupied the covetous position of a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and was the Political Commissar of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow founded by Lenin in 1922. He had also founded the Military School at Tashkent where he gave lessons in Communist ideology and strategy to his pupils, most of whom were Muslim Mohajirins including Shaukat Usmani. Why, even Ho Chi Minh was a student of Roy. Behind him lay his phenomenal revolutionary work in Mexico and his still earlier exploits as a nationalist-terrorist in Bengal.

Roy was young and flushed with success. He would have been abnormal if he had not been arrogant.

Be that as it may, when Roy came out of jail in 1936, he seemed to have shed whatever arrogance he had had. In my opinion such a change in temperament was the natural result of his study of several subjects, especially philosophy, which he had time to pursue during the six years of secluded jail life. His incarceration certainly gave him the opportunity to develop his fertile mind. I, for one, did not find him arrogant in my limited experience.

He was like a voyager in search of new horizons, new vistas and new panoramas. And as he continued exploring uncharted seas, the seasoned sailor went on gathering serendipitous gems in his sailor's chest. The more the mysteries of life unfolded themselves the humbler he became. He had come to realise that there were still more things unknown and unknowable to him in the short span of his life on earth—the only life which he in his rationalism accepted with cheer as a "biological accident".

Vis-a-vis Spratt, I need only add that Roy held him in great esteem and affection. Why, in his Preface to *New Humanism* he openly acknowledged his debt first to Philip Spratt for his "valuable suggestions"—a telling commentary on Roy's "arrogance"

(c) Was Roy an egoist?

As to the charge of Roy being an egoist: only one proof should suffice to refute it. In the Preface to his *Memoirs Of A Cat* he has made approach to autobiography crystal clear. I quote the opening paragraph in extenso almost " . . . only people, obsessed with the idea that they are destined to play historical roles, write autobiographies. The inevitable results of that underlying motive can be counter-balanced only by an extraordinary high degree of self-criticism. The two cannot naturally go together. One cannot be egoistic and self-critical, at the same time. Autobiographies are worth reading only as works of fine literature. Very few of them, however, can measure upto that standard. For these considerations, I have never been inclined to record the events of my life or trace the development of my mind".

Somewhere in the *Letters* he tells Ellen: "Pseudo - great men

are a tiresome lot. Conceit, covered by false modesty, is an incurable disease. And when the disease is made into a virtue, and applauded as such even by those who are expected to know better the problem becomes baffling".

Discussing Bertrand Russell in another letter he says: "He is a twentieth century Hume and cheerfully with blissful irresponsibility goes much farther than his master" and dilating on Neo-Mystics he comments that they "must be met on their own ground, should be judged by their own standards. . ."

Is there any trace of egoism in such an objective approach to philosophy.

His admirers and followers had brought constant pressure on him to write his autobiography. Their main argument was that Roy did not have the right to deprive them of evaluating as many facets of his life as possible. And Roy, the Man yielded.

Anyone who goes through his first and only volume of *Memoirs* will be hard put to find traces of egoism in its pages. Anyone else would have succumbed to the temptation of romanticising such colourful adventures and such chequered experiences as Roy had. But he chose to remain factual—factual to a fault.

Humanism was always at the back of Roy's mind even when he was a communist. He had begun to formulate his philosophy of New Humanism in the midst of the war. But it was only when communications were restored toward the end of the war that he came to learn that similar trends were operating in the free countries of the world, especially in Europe in the midst of the holocaust. He refers to them frankly and with joy. And while stating that the crisis of culture called for a "new altitude to life as a whole, a new social ideology, a new philosophy" he adds: "This is a *modest contribution* (italics mine) to that great human effort of the age".

Certainly not a thought which an egoist would harbour.

(d) Was Roy uncompromising?

As to the charge of being uncompromising, why, Roy himself never made any secret of it.

Had he compromised when he was in Russia, he might have

continued as an accredited leader of the Communist International side by side with Stalin.

Had he compromised when he was in the Indian National Congress he might have been one of the Presidents of that prestigious organisation.

Had he compromised with British Imperialists during the War Years he might have occupied a covetous position in the echelons on the banks of the Jamuna.

Had he compromised and fought the first elections after the War, by resorting to time-honoured tactics in politics misleading the electorate with romantic promises and catering to their superstitions and ignorance, his Radical Democratic Party of India might have won a few seats in the Parliament.

After the debacle of the Radical Democratic Party in the said elections had he compromised he would have continued in party politics and won popularity with the masses. Because there was still the halo of romance and myth enveloping his personality.

Had he compromised and kept himself nearer to Jawaharlal Nehru he might have been his friend, philosopher and guide.

But wisely or not, Roy always stuck to his principles unmindful of worldly success.

When he formulated the long-term programme of New Humanism he was aware that it was not possible for him to attain it in his life-time—nay, not even in the life-time of his junior followers. And still he pursued it.

The man accused of impatience had shown the patience of Job in him. The man accused of arrogance had revealed the humility of a saint. The man accused of egoism had gone to the extent of subordinating his personal greatness in the service of the cause he espoused.

Roy's one ruling passion was his dedication to the ideal of the social emancipation of man—the Ultima Thule which he had destined for himself as not capable of reaching in his life-time.

His cardinal satisfaction lay in knowing that he was going in the right direction, step by step, on the road leading to his destination—his *Manzil-e-Maksud.* ■ ■ ■

45. Was Roy a failure?

Those who never came in contact with Roy or those who are superficially interested consider him a failure in politics. This misconception is due to a surface identification of success with power, position and popularity.

If he failed to capture power it was because he did not hanker after power for the sake of power. Somewhere he had said: "Even a few people can lay a foundation of democracy and freedom if they will forego the quest for power."

If he did not stick to his high position in the Kremlin and if he did not become popular in India it was because he refused to compromise. Leaving aside the USSR, the nationalist press in India not only boycotted him virtually but also did not miss a chance to misrepresent him. The Communist press went further in its routine vituperations. Roy became a victim of character assassination. No spiritual leader ever ignored martyrdom with greater equanimity than the materialist-philosopher.

But Roy was an undoubted success in so far as his ideas wielded an influence, willy nilly, even on those who were opposed to him politically, socially and culturally.

When Roy fell from the grace of his one time Russian comrades they distorted every action of his vis-a-vis the debacle in China. Now they also vilified him for his so-called Decolonisation Thesis. Kremlin decided to follow the Borodin line. But history vindicated Roy. In his classic book *Revolution And Counter Revolution In China* which was first published in German, Roy has dealt with it all exhaustively citing facts and figures chronologically. Even after Roy abjured communism the book has been considered a "must" for a proper study of Sinology.

And they say Roy was a failure.

In his "Letters To The Congress Socialists", written in jail, he warned them that if they continued "to sail under the false colours of socialism" in the heterogenous National Congress, they would come to grief sooner or later. He was misunderstood for his epistomologically worked out analysis and laughed out for his unsolicited advice. But Nemesis overtook the angry young men of their time in the end and they had

to go out of the Congress. One more Roy's predictions had come true.

And they say Roy was a failure.

It was during the storm and stress of the Second World War that the Indian Federation of Labour set up a committee, under the inspiration of Roy, to draft a plan of economic development. It was authored by Prof. G. D. Parikh and Barrister V. M. Tarkunde again with Roy as their guide. It came to be known as "People's Plan". Indian Federation of Labour released it for general discussion in early 1944.

The Plan had given first priority to agricultural production inasmuch as 70 per cent of Indian labour was engaged in it. It was ignored by the Congress Government which came to power after war. But the inexorable logic of events compelled it to adopt some of the recommendations in the succeeding Five Year Plans. It was done haltingly and, of course, without the powers-that-be acknowledging the debt they owed to the foresight of Roy.

Now People's Plan II has been drawn up by a Committee for Economic Planning set up by Roy's Indian Renaissance Institute, Dehra Dun. The Committee prepared it under the chairmanship of our eminent jurist and seasoned Royist, Ex-Justice V. M. Tarkunde. Prof. G. D. Parikh would certainly have been there with Tarkunde, but, alas he died too soon!

The Plan was released for public debate in May 1977 by no less a luminary than the Hon'ble H. M. Patel, Finance Minister of the Janata Government. Its 7 point programme lays stress on rapid increase in our agricultural output and welfare of agriculturists.

It is for the first time in our post-independence political history that the Janata government allotted priority to the agricultural sector and placed the long overdue emphasis on the development of agriculture in its policy statement. Is it not illustrative of the posthumous success of "The Man Who Looked Ahead?"

And they say Roy was a failure.

The Draft Constitution of India was also formulated by Roy during the war years. He did not go the whole hog with Abraham Lincoln's time-honoured definition of democracy as "the rule of the people, by the people, for the people". He rightly pointed out that the evils in a democratic society were due to

the people delegating power to their elected leaders. In the heyday of our highly industrialised civilisation, once the leaders were entrenched, they misused their power more often than not. So he deleted the third attribute, namely "for the people" from his definition of democracy. He submitted that since power rightly belongs to the people, they should not stop taking interest in their politics once they had cast their votes. Naturally, such a far-reaching change could not go in appeal with vested interests and they scandalised Roy as an agent of British Imperialism.

The Draft has many features enshrined in the Constitution of India whose chief architect was Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Notably the clauses on the freedom of expression had become a casualty during the Emergency.

Incidentally, "the father of the Indian Constitution" and "the father of Radical Democracy" had come close to each other even before the founding of the Indian Federation of Labour. Both were rationalists and intellectuals. Both were fired with an intense passion to uplift the toiling masses from their miserable lot over centuries—as much as Gandhiji himself.

And they say Roy was a failure.

Roy maintained that if Indian democracy was to become a real democracy, that is to say, if it remained true to democratic practice, it was necessary to work the way up from the lowest level of society—from the village upwards. And certainly it was Roy who had first gone into greater detail about the formation of "People's Committees" in villages than anyone else. Later on Jayaprakash Narayan also began to propagate the idea as a leader of the Sarvodaya Movement.

It was Roy who had said: "Any effort for a re-organisation of society must begin from the unit of society—from the root, so to say. Such an effort to develop a new philosophy of revolution on the basis of the entire stock of human heritage and then to elaborate the theory and formulate the principles of the practice of political action and economic reconstruction, therefore, can be called Radicalism."

Roy, the epistemologist, believed in delving deep into the bowels of society so as to make it an ideal place to live in pleasantly, wisely and well.

The Citizens For Democracy which Jayaprakash founded in the midst of "the Indira wave" adopted a programme to help in the establishment of People's Committees at village level by placing necessary information and imparting necessary education to the people and make them realise that they are as much the government as their elected leaders in parliament, assemblies and gram panchayats. In passing, it may be stated that many Royists were among the first to join Citizens for Democracy.

The Radical Humanist Association has also given a prominent place to the formation of People's Committees in their programme doing "ground work by way of the education of the people in the values and conventions of democracy".

And they say Roy was a failure.

People's Committees postulate Partyless Politics. Roy had said: "Radicalism thinks in terms neither of nations nor of class. It's concern is man . . . It conceives freedom as freedom of the individual. Therefore it can also be called New Humanism . . ."

I have already dealt with the issue. Hence I should not indulge in any further inflictions on my readers. Except this: The idea of Partyless Politics in still a laudable dream of idealist politicians and intellectuals. But Party Politics is bound to hold its sway over the peoples of the world for a long, long time to come—unless some unforeseen world upheaval brings about a mutative change in our civilisation.

In *The Memoirs Of A Cat* Roy speaks through his feline heroine: "I am a member of the barbarous institution called civilised society—to keep reconciled to the misery of 'earthly life in the hope of getting 'the pie in the sky' . . ."

Truth is not always beautiful. Sometimes it is ugly and it hurts: But we must face reality bravely and squarely. That is why elsewhere in the book Roy deplores that some Indian rishis had preached: "Tell the truth but tell pleasant things . . ."

Be that as it may. As Victor Hugo said: "There is nothing so terrible as the birth of an idea whose time has come". And time is moving in the direction of a Brotherhood of Man, be it at snail's pace. When that brotherhood will become a reality, Partyless Politics will be there going forward, *pari passu*, to the ultimate social emancipation of mankind.

Roy was one of the pioneer intellectuals who had seen the shape of things to come through the calcified layers of our industrial civilisation. He was motivated by a passion for the best in everything. For him: "Passion is the sign of life. To be passionless is to be hopeless." He had the capacity to enjoy life in all its vicissitudes and against all odds. And he wanted everyone to do so. That is why he submitted through his feline philosopher: "Indians must learn to love life, if they want to be free politically, prosper materially, advance culturally and also elevate themselves morally."

Therein lies the secret of bringing India out of its confused and confusing way of life and make it a meaningful one. It was in conformity with this approach that he said: "The end of party system is a condition for purifying politics." And that's why he preached that a philosophical revolution is the condition precedent to social revolution.

When Roy spoke of the ultimate social emancipation of mankind he did not conceive of a state of society which would become the last word in Utopia. Because Utopia in its final analysis is perfection. Perfection implies stagnation; and stagnation is death, biologically speaking. Hence he maintained that even when man attains Utopia, it will defeat its purpose if it does not become a stepping stone to still further explorations in the exciting adventure of life. Roy was not a man in hurry . . .

And they say Roy was a failure.

For Roy freedom was the be-all and end-all of everything at every stage in his mental evolution. Nationalism, communism, marxism, radical democracy and new humanism were just so many means to that end. Freedom was the running thread on the chequered canvas of his life. This thread gave the mosaic pattern a unity of its own—a unity of purpose which explains whatever is inexplicable in him at first glance.

Roy considered the urge for freedom as a continuation of the biological struggle for survival. In *New Humanism* he says: "Man did not appear on the earth out of nowhere. He rose out of the background of the physical Universe, through the long process of biological evolution. The umbilical cord was never broken: man, with his mind, intelligence, will, remains an integral part of the physical Universe. The latter is a cosmos, a

law-governed system. Therefore, man's being and becoming, his emotions, will, ideas are also determined: man is essentially rational. Reason in man is an echo of the harmony of Universe. Morality must be referred back to man's innate rationality. Only then, man can be moral, spontaneously and voluntarily."

And again in *New Orientation* he analyses this urge for freedom autobiographically. I may quote an entire paragraph from it. It helps us to understand Roy, the Man all the better:

"When, as a school boy of fourteen, I began my political life, which may end in nothing, I wanted to be free. Independence, complete and absolute, is a new fangled idea. The old fashioned revolutionaries thought in terms of freedom. In those days, we had not read Marx. We did not know about the existence of the proletariat. Still, many spent their lives in jail and went to the gallows. There was no proletariat to propel them. They were not conscious of class struggle. They did not have the dream of Communism. But they had the human urge to revolt against the intolerable conditions of life. They did not know exactly how those conditions could be changed. But they tried to change them, any how. I began my political life with that spirit and I still draw my inspiration rather from that spirit than from the three volumes of *Das Kapital* or three hundred volumes by the Marxists. That is the basic urge of freedom, which created this world of men, which created the feudal as well as the capitalist world, and which will create a still better world of which we are dreaming".

In this sense, Roy was also a dreamer. The thought of bringing about "a still better world" was a constant with him. But he was not just an idle dreamer. He worked zealously towards its ultimate realisation. He linked the lessons of history, philosophy, physics, biology etc. with man's basic rationality and urge for freedom.

And they say Roy was a failure.

Roy was an incorrigible optimist and his underlying faith in the rationality of man sustained that optimism throughout his life. When the darkest of clouds had cast their terror-shadows on earth and Hitler's hordes continued to trample one country after another under their iron heel, Roy remained optimistic. When someone asked him the basis of his optimism he said to the effect: "I have greater faith in human nature than any

others. Besides my analysis of the outcome of the war is not based merely on our local English paper but also those in other languages like Spanish and French."

And they say Roy was a failure.

When Roy died politicians of all shades, (except of course the Communists) and educationists and intellectuals of all climes seemed to have suddenly come out of their neglect of Roy alive. Glowing tributes were paid to his memory and recognition accorded to his life-work.

If any research worker were to find time to make a collection of all that was written about Roy at that time and compare and contrast it with what many of them had said in earlier years, it would bring out one of the strange ironies of history.

The Manchester Guardian a newspaper of world stature and well-known for its liberalism wrote in its tribute to Roy that he was "an outstanding figure of the age in Asia gifted with political clairvoyance" and added: "If liberalism and rationalism survive in India Mr. Roy should be periodically remembered as one of their most disinterested champions."

And they say Roy was a failure.

Post Script: If his critics still persist in calling Roy a failure, we may call it a day describing it philosophically as "a glorious failure" out and out preferable to "transient success". ■ ■ ■

46. Was Roy infallible?

Certainly not. Or else he would not have been human. Only the man who works can make mistakes. The idler never does. It is so easy to learn things. But it is deucedly difficult to unlearn them in the light of new knowledge. As already said, Roy never made a fetish of his opinions and was the first to correct himself.

For the purposes of this chapter let us divide Roy's life in six phases, be it loosely:

First phase: 1907 to 1914—When he was a romantic revolutionary in his youth.

Second phase: 1914 to 1930—When he came in the orbit of

Marxism and Communism.

Third phase: 1930 to 1936—When he was in India and in jail.

Fourth phase: 1936 to 1940—When he identified himself with the Indian National Congress.

Fifth phase: 1940 to 1948—When he founded the Radical Democratic Party of India and remained an active party politician.

Sixth phase: 1948 to 1954—When he decided to go into voluntary political exile and founded the Radical Humanist Movement of India.

The first phase does not need elaboration. The young Roy (who then went by his real name, Narendranath Bhattacharya) was beset with the urge to free his country from the foreign yoke. Under the inspiring leadership of Jatin Mukherji he become a nationalist revolutionary and risked his all. His exploits read like pages culled out of a novel of romance and thrills. He was lucky in escaping liquidation at the hands of the British Intelligence Service and police. After the lightning death of Jatinda, the torch bearer, in an ambush at Balasore, Roy who was already out of India, was completely on his own. However much he changed in his views, the urge for freedom remained an Absolute with him throughout his life. In the given context there was then no question of his being fallible or otherwise.

In the second phase: Roy roamed over many countries in Southeast Asia, America and Europe. He came in contact with many intellectuals and politicians of all shades and went on augmenting his study in several subjects.

During the First World War he had romantically expected the German military might to free India from the British Imperialist rule. But when he realised that the Germans only wanted to substitute themselves in place of the British he turned away from them for good.

About the same time he had become involved in Marxism and Communism. He looked upon this ideology as a catalyst leading to a 'paradise on earth'. By the way, it was years afterwards that he came to realise that Communism was just a mirage.

In the meantime all his actions rested on the postulate of Communism as the only alternative to bring the world out of

"capitalist dominance". At that time he failed to foresee any good resulting from a mutative change in capitalist economy in highly developed industrial countries. In fact, the likelihood of capitalism ever becoming liberal in its own self-interest under pressure of events had not been envisaged even by Karl Marx. Hence Roy's approach became now and then fallacious in spite of its logicality.

It was Roy who had founded the Communist Party of India in Tashkent in 1920. But he had been away from his homeland for many, many years; and his assessment of the objective, revolutionary potentialities of the Indian bourgeoisie, suffered from a lack of first-hand knowledge. With his implicit faith in Communism, Roy managed to send his writings and clandestine directives to Indian Communists. But despite their intellectual brilliance they turned out to be misplaced. Even so in consonance with his honesty of thought once Roy was back in India it did not take him long to correct his perspective.

During his early years in Russia, Roy had been completely swayed by the oratory of Trotsky. In the article which he wrote shortly after the assassination of *enfant terrible* of the Russian Revolution, Roy states that although he was closer to Lenin he had thought that Trotsky was justified in opposing Lenin's New Economic Policy. He admits candidly: "I also made the mistake of considering his (Trotsky's) attitude as more revolutionary" and adds: "Trotsky's personal magnetism and emotional appeal found ready response in the romanticism of the immature (meaning those like him than the hard-boiled practical revolutionary meaning those like Lenin). Analysing himself he says: "I could learn and gradually attain the maturity of intelligence necessary for discriminating unostentatious solidarity from flares."

Trotsky was naturally shocked at Roy's last minute defection in the session of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1927 which removed the second one of Bertram Wolfe's "Three Who Made The Revolution" from its membership.

Roy states that he had felt sorry for Trotsky who was in the minority of one in that session. And Roy, the Man was disgusted with the attitude of other pro-Stalinists mechanically denouncing Trotsky "in a vituperative language" and felt

that "the giant should not be humiliated by marionettes". He wanted to make a gesture of protest against "pygmies tilting toy lances at the lion". But he failed to do so. He admits his failing stating he was "still not free from subjectivism".

But having become convinced that Trotsky was wrong in insisting upon his Theory of Permanent Revolution he cast his vote against "the giant". To Roy, Trotsky's opposition "did not fit in with the logic of the situation in which the revolution was to develop".

To understand Roy's mental working one must go to the said article and his opus "The Russian Revolution". Whether one agrees with him or not, he has at least exhaustively dwelt on Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution and the Leninist New Economic Policy of making a success of the Revolution in Soviet Union. Lenin had been dead for over three years and Roy had come closer to Stalin who continued the policy in his ruthless manner. Many more years were to pass before he was to become completely disillusioned with the arch-dictator of Russia who like the Roman Caesars had elevated himself on a self-created pedestal to be worshipped as a demi-god which the penetrating mind of Lenin had visualised a little before he died. Victor Sergie referred to it in *Lenin to Stalin* his book in defence of Trotsky.

It is a fact of history that the Russian Revolution did not develop as Roy and his ilk had visualised. To that extent, Roy was certainly fallible.

Roy had an obsessive faith, almost childlike, in the ability of Stalin to change the face of the world for the better in the long-run. Strange as it may seem, this faith persisted even after Stalin had made a scapegoat of him in the wake of the Russian debacle in China. He believed that Stalin would play the role assigned to him by history as a Twentieth Century Emancipator after Hitler's defeat. He had termed his envisaged process as "Red Napoleonism". But when he faced the reality of the situation at long last he was thoroughly disillusioned. Now it had become as clear as daylight that the ruthless Russian dictator had no intention to hold the red banner of hammer and sickle aloft as symbol of man's emancipation. The Generalissimo held the banner firmly in his hand only to keep the East European communist countries under his iron heel.

Roy admitted forthright that history had thrown his analysis overboard. Was he just hoping against hope all along? Be that as it may, Roy declared that modern "Red Napoleonism" had degenerated into modern "Bonapartism" verily like its prototype. He now began to slash Stalin for his political chicanery in articles after articles in the *Radical Humanist* Weekly and other writings. As far as I remember even then whenever Roy referred to Stalin in conversation he did so with a tinge of sadness.

Roy was always a learner and no learner can ever claim to be infallible.

In the third phase: Roy returned to India as a convinced Marxist-Leninist Communist. But he was soon arrested and convicted to six years of imprisonment by the Appellate Court in the Cawnpore Conspiracy case. Once he was in jail he was completely divorced from the outside world. But he made an excellent use of his time by applying himself to the study of a variety of subjects.

It was as if Roy had closetted himself in his ivory tower and did not want to be disturbed. He went on making exhaustive notes of all that he could read within the four walls of his cell and supplemented it with his previously amassed lore. He called the collection "The Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science" and wanted to publish them in 9 or 10 volumes. Those few who have gone through the monumental notes are staggered by their cosmic range. Thus his jail life was a blessing in disguise for Roy in his mental evolution.

In the fourth phase: As soon as Roy was out of jail in 1936, he joined the Indian National Congress much to the consternation of Indian Communists. Soon he formed the League of Radical Congressmen as a wing of that organisation. But Roy's rule inside the Congress was that of a dissenter. While agreeing with its major aims and objects to win political freedom, he refused to put Mahatma Gandhi on a pedestal. In result, not only did he antagonise the High Command but also forfeited the sympathy of the rank and file of Congressmen, as well as the masses. He had only the support of his small loyal band of Royists. Thus Roy's postulate of Radical Democracy became a hindrance in his way. It was at variance with the Zeitgeist of Indian politics. For all practical purposes, he lagg-

ed behind the assertive mood of the moment, perforce. But he did not lose heart and remained true to his perspective, swimming against the current, as it were, lion-heartedly.

In the fifth phase: The tide of events washed him away from the main current. The fourth phase had ended very soon with the outbreak of the Second World War. The parting of ways with the National Congress had matured. As a avowed anti-fascist he did not vacillate over joining hands with the democratic forces fighting the menace of Hitler and the ascendency of Nazi war machinery with back to the wall. The Congress had disavowed him. After the fall of Paris, Roy founded the Radical Democratic Party of India in December 1940 and now there was no turning back for him in the war of attrition. For him India's freedom was a part of world freedom. To Roy freedom was indivisible, much before it became a fashion.

Now, more than ever before, Roy and Royists were misunderstood, misrepresented and maligned in the four corners of nationalist India. I have already referred to all this elsewhere. Hence I close the fifth phase with only one observation. Roy's prediction came true when, in the wake of the victory of the democratic countries, India gained its political independence.

That Roy's contribution went unrecognised is an irony of history. Nevertheless, the man who believed that work is its own reward was supremely happy.

During the fifth phase Roy had dubbed Jawaharlal Nehru as "Hamlet Of Indian Politics" and also criticised him for tilting his neutrality in foreign affairs in the direction of the USSR, its satellites and other pro-Communist countries.

Analysing Nehru, Roy has said: "No dispassionate critic of his attitude suspects that Nehru is a Communist or that he would deliberately lead India to a position antagonistic to democracy". But when Nehru, the uncompromising anti-Imperialist, tilted his non-Alignment Policy towards the USSR Roy feared that Nehru was willy nilly jeopardising the future of democracy in India. He maintained that there was the danger of Nehru's actions ushering in an authoritarian rule on fascist or communist lines; and he submitted that Nehru then would not be in a position to avert the impending doom,

in spite of his being a liberal "with a high degree of moral integrity, refinement and personal charm".

It was not difficult for Roy, who had seen the Russian Revolution "eat its own children", to visualise such an eventuality.

Roy's penchant for an analytical approach to all problems had led him to its logical conclusion: that it was the result of a contradiction in the attitude of Nehru, the modern man, with a scientific bent of mind trying to rationalise "the racial animus of nationalism" and equate it with progress. For, Roy zealous nationalism, although much in vogue, had played out its historical role and become anachronistic in the context of our civilisation moving onward to a Brotherhood of Man.

In Roy's estimate the default in Nehru's case was due to his attachment to Gandhiji who "belonged to the middle ages, representing the best of the moral traditions although on a lower level intellectually".

For Roy, Nehru had failed as a diplomat because he was "too honest to be one". Therein lay the *raison d'etre* of Roy calling Nehru a willy nilly crypto-Communist.

But all said and done Nehru, the architect of modern India, was also a humanist—a man of high idealism on whom had devolved the responsibilities of India's Prime Ministership by dint of circumstances. But Roy did not make allowances for Nehru the Prime Minister compulsively involved in the labyrinth of foreign relationships. Of course, he was in the good company of many others all over the world. But here it is relevant to deal with Roy, vis-a-vis Nehru only.

Roy knew his Red China inside out. When Mao-tse-Tung had crossed the Yang-Tse river he was convinced that nothing would stop Mao from becoming the overlord of the ancient country of high culture and civilisation. He had warned our Government over and again of the impending danger to India. He had said that after Tibet "India's turn may come soon" and he doubted "if Nehru's policy can guard India against the menace".

When the threat became a reality and the bubble of Nehru's "nine-day flirtation" had burst, Nehru himself came out and admitted that he was living "in a world of dreams". The good man had the shock of his life from which he never recovered

completely.

Had Roy been alive, he would surely have revised his opinion of Nehru the democrat at heart and admitted the extent to which he was wrong in calling our well-meaning but misguided Prime Minister a crypto-Communist.

Roy was second to none in appreciating Gandhiji in his herculean task of uplifting the masses from their centuries old poverty. In an article he wrote in *Independent India* as far back as 1938 he recognised the worth of Gandhiji as a "political awakener" and unstintedly admired him for his courage "to stoop to the level of the masses still on a very low level in order to raise it at higher" (level). He never lost an opportunity to emphasise and agree with the highest moral codes of the Mahatma.

With Gandhiji as the natural leader of the Indian people Roy considered the Indian National Congress as the best medium which needed to be supported by all freedom loving Indians.

At the same time and in keeping with his rationalism he was dead set against the tactics of the Mahatma to mix up his secular political programme with religion and superstition. He was convinced that Gandhiji was unwittingly dragging the people into the morass of a revivalist India. In *Science And Superstition* he has remarked that "Captive of the past can never conquer the future". Roy rightly maintained that objective criticism did not exclude an honest appreciation of a given personality.

But whereas Roy was a master strategist, Gandhiji had an edge over him as a master tactician.

Although Roy was aware of the extreme religious bias of Indians, rich and poor, and of all castes and creeds, he refused to take it into consideration. Because where the Mahatma was a shrewd compromiser, Roy was an utter non-compromiser. Both were above board and both were highly moral men. It is another story that whereas Gandhiji was literally deified, his worshippers maligned Roy. But where Gandhiji the saint, practised politics as an art of the possible, Roy the materialist did not treat it as an axiom.

When the Noakhali carnage occurred Gandhiji put everything aside and dedicated himself to the task of bringing about harmony between the warring communities of Hindus

and Muslims. Roy had words of high praise for the Mahatma's moral courage. Roy's insistence on employing fair means to attain the desired end, namely the creation of a society of spiritually and morally free men was not a whit less pronounced than that of Gandhiji or for that matter anyone else in the history. He had said: "Freedom cannot be attained by immoral means nor can an enlightened man be a liar".

It is an irony worthy of the Greek classical tragedy that despite a common focal point on the plane of morality the two great men of destiny could not join hands.

Radical Humanism can be said to be based on the postulate of what Protagoras had said some twenty-five hundred years earlier, namely, "man is the measure of all things" and which Roy formulated as "man is the maker of his destiny". For Roy the sovereignty of man is sacrosanct and *sine qua non* of his final liberation, political, social, moral and spiritual.

In formulating Radical Humanism, Roy the thinker went beyond Marx the philosopher. Once he realised that his earlier and partly subjective efforts to justify the findings of the Master were of no avail to him in his overriding quest for freedom, he gave them up stoutly. That is why he changed the name of *The Independent India* Weekly to *The Radical Humanist* Weekly and its intellectual counterpart and journal *The Marxian Way* to *The Humanist Way*.

It must have caused him many a sleepless night to foreswear his one-time belief in the Economic Determination of Marx. But once he was convinced that it had become unserviceable, in the light of historical development, he refuted it with all the strength of his intellect. He submitted that a rational political theory becomes a sham if it is not tied up with a rational moral practice. It was but natural that Roy should extend this rationale to all fields of human activity. It is the totality of personality in every individual in society, which alone will enable man, as a result of co-operative effort to reach his desired goal—the ultimate co-operative commonwealth of the world.

The way of life that is Radical Humanism helps man to realise that his sovereignty is an inseparable attribute to his being on earth and he has to fight against all odds and assert it to make a reality of his dream of a "paradise on earth".

Radical Humanism is a monistic philosophy, say, like that of Ernst Haeckel with his thesis of "the good, the beautiful and the true" as the answer to man's emancipation. These attributes which are inter-connected logically pervade over the axiology of Radical Humanism and its Twenty-two Theses, be they worded differently.

Even when Roy was in jail he was vaguely toying with the idea of becoming a recluse. In one of his "Letters" he confides to Ellen: "Lately I have been developing inclination towards a retired life devoted to scientific work, for some time at any rate".

The god of circumstance had played his cards mastermindedly and step by step led Roy to reach the goal he had subconsciously desired more than a decade earlier.

Now Roy had gathered all the grand comprehensions in himself. He had not only gone beyond Communism and Marxism but also all humdrum controversies, self-destroying conflicts, futile bickerings and disturbing misapprehensions. Hatred, he had never harboured. Moral, he always was. And spirituality in its unexceptionable rationalistic sense he had always cherished. Now it seemed that the man who had gone through most tumultuous experiences had arrived at his destination. He had scaled the highest of peaks and built his abode atop—a vantage point from where he could survey the panorama of life in all its vicissitudes with the serenity of a seer. When someone damned him with faint praise and called him unrealistic he just smiled to himself.

Was this the smile on his face when he breathed his last? ■ ■ ■

Appendices

1. How I came to be a Royist *

The first time I came to know of M. N. Roy was in late 1928. I was then a four-anna member of the Indian National Congress. I used to meet some youth Congress leaders—such as Yusuf Meherali, Minoo Masani, Asoka Mehta and Rohit Dave (who were later to form the Congress Socialist Party)—in the premises of the Student's Brotherhood at the foot of the Sandhurst Bridge in Bombay. It was through them that I received my hearsay information about Roy's legendary activities at home and abroad and mainly in the USSR.

Then came his sensational arrest in Bombay in 1931 and M. N. Roy became news overnight. But somehow or other I did not come across any of his prolific writings then; and reports in the leading newspapers like *The Times of India* were hostile to him as a revolutionary and extreme communist. In spite of my youthful exuberance for leftist politics I was not enamoured of the communist ideology and its inhuman application in the USSR. The lessons of English literature and the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi had gone deep in the veins of the educated class and the theory of the end justifying the means did not make sense to many of us who subscribed to a democratic way of life. Hence my first interest in Roy was as a rather romantic character. At best, he appeared to be the Elusive Pimpernel of Indian politics.

We had come to know that it was as "Doctor Mahmood" that Roy had landed in Bombay and that prior to his arrest in 1931 it was in that disguise that he had clandestinely met a few ultra-leftists in an old building in the dingy Tara Temple Lane situated opposite Lamington Road police station. Only a select few knew of his real identity. I had already given up the pretence of my career as an advocate practising in the lower courts of Bombay and cast my dice to be a film maker. Even so, out of sheer curiosity I began to pass by Tara Temple

* Reproduced from the *Radical Humanist* Monthly, May 1977.

Lane on my way to the Lamington Road Branch of the YMCA. It was my favourite rendezvous where I used to relax with my friends playing table-tennis and other indoor games.

There was a peddler of proscribed books called Narayan. He used to stand at the corner of the lane with a cycle by his side. At the least suspicion of policeman coming up, he would jump on his cycle and vanish from sight with his bundle of books. I was a witness to his split-second performance more than once. It was from him that I had also purchased some pro-Trotsky literature, notably Victor Sergie's "From Lenin To Stalin". This literature fortified my anti-Stalin stance all the more. Since Roy was a Stalinist I could not but censure him for his activities about which I had very incomplete knowledge. I did not then know of his political dissent as a non-conformist Marxist. All that had stuck in my mind was his famous Thesis which Lenin had submitted along with his own for discussion in the Second World Conference in 1920. Needless to say that I was just an amateur flirting with politics and had not come across its contents then. The more busy I became with my film work, the further away I kept myself from indulging in politics.

Then, one fine evening in 1935 or 1936 I passed by the Chowpatty sea face. I saw a small circle of people gathered a little distance away and heard an impassioned female voice. To satiate my curiosity I went up. I saw a woman clad in a simple sari standing on a wooden box and delivering a speech. I was naturally reminded of soap-box orators in Hyde Park. The speaker was none other than Maniben Kara, one of the earliest Royists who was to rise to the pinnacle of fame in course of time as the most respected trade union leader in India and abroad. I could not follow the subject of her speech as I had reached there at the fag end. But I remember that she had made a passionate reference to M. N. Roy who was then in jail. I was struck with the ovation she received from her listeners as they dispersed shouting: "Maniben Zindabad! M. N. Roy Zindabad". I felt shy to approach a stranger and she walked away elegantly with her friends.

Later on when *Independent India* Weekly began to be published in early 1937, I used to buy my copies from the ubi-

quitous Narayan who stood as a landmark at the corner of Tara Temple Lane. There is no record of Narayan's contribution in luring passers-by to purchase *Independent India* and making them interested in Roy and Royism. But if the Royists had been in the Bombay Municipal Corporation they might have submitted a proposal to change the name of the lane to "Narayan Lane".

On his release from jail, Roy had joined the National Congress and founded the League of Radical Congressmen much to the consternation of Indian Communists. Its small Bombay office was situated in a building opposite Charni Road Station.

I cannot place how and when I first met that stalwart and self-effacing Royist, V. B. Karnik. But I do remember that I used to purhcase the Royist literature from him in that office. I had also given a full page advertisement of my Wadia Movietone films in some numbers of the Weekly. D. B. Karnik, V.B.'s brother and another loyal Royist, had told me that it was Narayan who had informed him and V.B. that a wellknown film producer was in the habit of purchasing his copy of the Weekly every week from him. The Karniks just wondered what sort of film magnate and capitalist I was to be interested in Royism. In fact, I also did not know.

When I was in the Congress, Veer Nariman of the "Harvey-Nariman Case" fame and the undisputed leader of the youth movement was my hero. I was one of the field workers who had given their time and energy to secure votes for him in the 1936 Elections which the Congress had contested with the avowed aim "to wreck the Constitution". We had expected Veer Nariman to be the Chief Minister of Bombay Presidency. But when the Congress Working Committee put aside his claim in favour of B. G. Kher many of us—the angry youngmen of the time—were shocked beyond belief. Feeling frustrated, I came out of the Congress. But here I must set the record right that Balasaheb Kher turned out to be an honest, competent, affable Chief Minister and all of us always held him in great respect.

I had already become a rationalist having gone through the literature of the Rationalist Press of Great Britain and several books in the Thinker's Library, including almost all the books and booklets of that fearless atheist, Joseph McCabe of whose versatility and erudition H. G. Wells was to say that it was

only once in a generation or so that a man like Joseph McCabe was born.

Thus it was M. N. Roy's rational outlook in every sphere of life which had initially drawn me to him. His grasp of world history, politics and religions, philosophy (Oriental and Western), physics and mathematics, even western music, was simply fantastic. In him, I discovered the most representative man of our 20th century Indian Renaissance, barring none. I soon became his fervent admirer but not a follower.

Even after coming in direct contact with him I did not join the League of Radical Congressmen as I had already abjured my interest in active politics. But it was only a question of time. Roy had divorced himself completely from the National Congress. After the holocaust that the Second World War had begun, Roy founded the Radical Democratic Party of India in December 1940 with full emphasis on anti-fascism as its aims and objects and I also became a founder-member. Now I began to call myself a Royist and have always remained one.

Once a Royist always a Royist; and where few of the adherents have left the fold, they have not given up their affection and respect for Roy nor forgotten Royist teachings. I do not know of any other personality in Indian politics for whom I can say this, Gandhiji being a most curious phenomenon of a man who was identified with the Congress and was also out of it at the same time. I say this as a matter of fact and not to underscore the immense contribution of the Mahatma to the awakening of mass consciousness. But if Gurudev Tagore was the artistic conscience of India and Gandhiji its spiritual conscience, M. N. Roy was certainly the intellectual conscience of India.

It is another story that this equally immense contribution of Roy has gone by default. It is an irony of history that in the land of his birth to which he courageously returned and risked his all in the cause of the freedom of his country, he has not been accorded recognition even as a revolutionary, leave aside the recognition due to him as a politician who looked ahead of times and always linked up the freedom of his country with that of the world itself. But it is not very unusual to find a prophet not honoured in his country . . . .

Roy and the Royists began to be respectable in the eyes of

the powers-that-be and other political parties in opposition—except, of course the Communists—only after the Radical Democratic Party of India was voluntarily dissolved and transformed into the Radical Humanist Movement in 1950 with its long-term programme of social emancipation of mankind—an inspiring phenomenon in the history of politics without parallel, indeed.

[I have not made any mention of Ellen Roy. But no account of Roy's life—since 1928 at least—will be complete if it did not recognise the silent contribution of Ellen to it. She was a pillar of strength to Roy ever since that time. Roy's *Letters From Jail* make this abundantly clear. There was a world of understanding between them in their thinking and actions. And ever since Ellen came to India to be by Roy's side after his release in 1936, it was always a shining illustration of team work. After Roy's death in 1954, more than anyone else it was the courageous Ellen who kept the torch of Royism aflame in all its brilliance. With full respect to some stalwart Royists and not belittling their dedication to the cause, I make bold to say that no one else could have then continued the publication of the *Radical Humanist* Weekly so zealously and so successfully as she did. The dastardly assassination of Ellen was the second big blow that the Royists had to bear. But they soon came out of it with determination to continue the long-term task of disseminating the message of Radical Humanism against all opposition from the Establishment. Surely as the sun rises, when nationalist passions die out, (as they are bound to, some day under the force of a new world of brotherhood in the making) Roy, the Man of modern Renaissance, Roy the humanist par excellence will receive the recognition and honour due to him from his countrymen.] ■ ■ ■

*2. How I came in contact with M. N. Roy**

It was sometime in 1924 or 1925 that I first heard the name of M. N. Roy. His sensational book *India in Transition* had been

* Reproduced from the *Radical Humanist* Monthly, May 1977.

banned in India. Again in 1929 I came to know a little more about his revolutionary activities through some paper or from someone—a communist, perhaps. But this much is certain, it was the romantic strain in Roy's life that attracted me to him initially.

About this time I had joined the Indian National Congress as a four-anna member. When the Second Civil Disobedience Movement began in 1932, I became an active member of the Parsi Rajkiya Sabha founded by B. F. Bharucha and volunteered to be a "Congress Dictator". I vaguely remember B.F.B. telling me that my turn would come after the first forty "dictators". But Gandhiji dissolved the movement in response to his inner voice after the last "dictator" whose number was under thirty, had been arrested. I lost the chance of becoming the "guest of the British Government".

I remember having attended earlier the famous mass meeting in Azad Maidan, then known as the Bombay Gymkhana maidan, when a tall Arab called Dr. Mahmud was said to be present in the crowd. But it was only after our efficient Deputy Police Commissioner Cawasji Petigara had arrested Roy in his Byculla hide-out in the flat of Pandit that I came to know that Dr. Mahmud was none other than Roy himself. In 1932 Roy was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment (reduced in appeal to six) in the Cawnpore Conspiracy Case and I learned much more about his elusive personality and fascinating adventures.

When Roy was released in November 1936, he joined the Indian National Congress overnight to the chagrin of Indian Communists. When he came to Bombay sometime afterwards I remember going to the Victoria Terminus station with my wife and son. I had expected a big crowd to receive him. But when Roy alighted from the train he was hailed by a surprisingly small number of enthusiasts. I put my son on my shoulders so that he could have a glimpse of Roy. I returned home somewhat confused. I could not understand why Roy's arrival had been bypassed by the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee and the Congressmen.

Roy started *Independent India* Weekly in April 1937 and I gave a full page advertisement of my current film in the very first issue. I used to go to its small office in the Empire

Building, opposite Charni Road station, and buy the issues regularly from the stalwart Royist V. B. Karnik personally. It was Karnik who initiated me in Royist literature, which I read avidly.

Karnik must have wondered what sort of interest it was that a capitalist film producer could have in socialism or communism. In sooth, my interest then was mainly academic. Temperamentally, I have been more or less of a centrist.

Then one fine morning in 1937 Karnik came to see me in my Wadia Movietone Studios at Lovji Castle, Parel, somewhat hesitatingly. He informed me that Roy and Ellen would be coming to Bombay shortly to stay for a couple of months or so. He was trying to collect a modest sum of Rs. 300 a month only for their creature comforts. This sum would suffice, Karnik said, as Roy and Ellen cooked their own meals and were content to live in a modest apartment.

I was flabbergasted. I said this was ridiculous. We had been told that every member of the Congress Working Committee used to receive an emolument of Rs. 800/- per month from the Congress treasury in charge of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj. Karnik smiled and said that Roy had not received and did not want to accept a single rupee from the Congress funds. He had a fundamental difference of opinion with Gandhiji's way of running the National Congress on a religious basis. Karnik quickly added that all he wanted from me was a modest sum of Rs. 30/- per month since he could collect an equal sum from nine other sympathisers and friends of Roy. I was speechless. I asked him to give me a day more to decide. Karnik left, thinking perhaps that I was afraid to associate my name with Roy's.

I went home and confided in my wife. I told her that I desired Roy and Ellen to be our guests at Casa da Vinci during their stay in Bombay. I also added that the Indian National Congress was not in the good books of the British Government. Moreover, since Roy was a bete-noire in their eyes, we should be prepared to be shadowed by the CID, along with the Roys. But she cut me short by replying that if I did not carry out my original intention, she would hold it against me.

The next day when Karnik came to the studio again I informed him that we desired Roy and Ellen to be honoured guests at our home. Now it was his turn to become speechless. But when

he left there were tears of joy in his eyes.

That is how Roy and Ellen first set foot at Casa da Vinci in the last week of May 1937, if I remember right, and a lifelong friendship came to pass between the Roys and the Wadias. Needless to say, I soon associated myself with the activities of Roy in whatever way I could. I did not join the League of Radical Congressmen as I had already been disillusioned with the working of the Indian National Congress after the 1936 elections. But Roy's rationalism in politics had appealed to me. I had already become somewhat of a Royist. When Roy founded the Radical Democratic Party of India I had the privilege to be one of the founder-members.

Since their first visit to the Casa, whenever Roy and Ellen came to Bombay they stayed with us. From 1938 to 1954 when Roy died and from 1954 to 1960 when Ellen was brutally murdered, Casa da Vinci was the venue of many an eventful, nay, even decisive meeting of the members of the Radical Democratic Party of India; and after its historic dissolution in December 1948, of the Radical Humanists. And then, what of the memorable get-togethers of intellectuals, revolutionaries, politicians, journalists, writers and others from India and abroad? More often than not, our dinner parties ran into the small hours of the morning.

But Roy and Ellen were veritable human dynamos of energy. The very next morning they would be at their desk. Roy would start his dictation and Ellen would capture it all on her portable typewriter with a speed which would be the envy of a professional steno.

Memories of these delightful events come back from the inner recesses of the mind like the sparkling waters of a beautiful, compelling cataract. This is not the place to dilate on them. But I cannot help ending my sketchy narration without adding that in all those many-splendoured experiences there runs a disturbing constant. The passing away of Roy and Ellen has left a sad gap in our life—a gap which my wife and I have not been able to bridge. ■ ■ ■

3. Ellen Roy—A brave and noble woman *

I do not know of anyone who was more self-effacing than Ellen Roy. She was not only M. N. Roy's devoted wife but also his companion, colleague, mother, nurse and personal secretary and stenographer.

She shared with him all his pleasures—in gardening, music, films, literature and culinary and fine arts. She shared all his travails—when he was in Germany, later on in jail in India and after his release, his misunderstood activities in the cause of India's freedom which he had identified with the freedom of mankind, his victimisation in Indian politics and his vilification at the hands of Communists.

Although she was an intellectual in her own right, she had willingly submerged her personality in favour of her husband and derived greater satisfaction in seeing him lionised by his followers and admirers.

My wife and I came in contact with her for the first time in 1938 when the Roys had accepted our invitation and come to stay with us at Casa da Vinci, our home on Worli Sea Face. This happy association continued year after year whenever the Roys used to be in Bombay. And even after Roy's death in 1954, Ellen was with us when in Bombay. This link was also tragically snapped when Ellen was dastardly assassinated in 1960.

We were silent watchers of Ellen's dedication to Roy. She acted as her husband's secretary and stenographer with a rare finesse. After their customary early breakfast, Roy and Ellen used to adjourn to their Study and the first thing that she did was to open her portable typewriter. As Roy dictated, Ellen was wont to moving her fingers rapidly on the key-board and then read out the dictation to him. Whenever Roy spoke in his meetings or delivered his lectures, Ellen was by his side with pencil and pad and went on jotting down in shorthand everything he said. Returning home, she would reduce her notes to typing and make cogent articles out of them. Had it not been for Ellen's tremendous spade work many of Roy's finest utterances might have been lost to posterity. Even if

* Reproduced from *The World Her Village*, edited by Sibnarayan Ray.

comparisons be odious, I will hazard one here: The self-effacement of another noble lady, Kasturba, has been duly acknowledged and recorded. But Ellen's self-effacement was greater in one respect, at least. Kasturba Gandhi shone in the reflected glory of her Mahatmic husband. But in the case of Ellen Roy it was in her to be effulgent on her own. And yet she never thought of gaining recognition for herself and was supremely happy in promoting that of her husband. Of course, Roy, who was not overtly sentimental, showed his gratitude in his own way at every opportunity especially when Ellen played the mother to him. Roy's health had suffered irreparably because of his six-year incarceration as a second class political prisoner. Even so, he had retained a phenomenal fund of energy. But it was Ellen who looked after his physical wellbeing every hour of the day. In the midst of serious discussion she would interrupt with a glass of water and requisite tablets saying: "Come on Roy, it's time for you to take this". And Roy would obey meekly as a lamb.

Very often we had late nights with the coterie of Royists. These stretched beyond the witching hours. Suddenly Ellen would get up saying: "Come on Roy, it's already late. You must go to bed". And Roy would obey the injunction with an appreciative twinkle in his eyes.

About a fortnight before her sudden end Hilla had written to her to come down to Bombay and be with us. She had accepted the invitation and we were looking forward to have her with us at the Casa. But it was not to be. Instead we received the stunning news . . . Ellen was no less indefatigable than Roy. Even during his life time she had written articles on diverse subjects in the *Independent India* and the *Radical Humanist* Weeklies and also a few books, notably *In Man's Image* with Sib Narayan Ray as co-author. But the mettle she was made of was revealed in fullness after Roy's death. Her moving article appeared in a March 1954 issue of the *Radical Humanist* Weekly. It was her *cri-de-cour* in which she laid bare her womanly feelings in striking emotional overtones. It is enshrined in the hearts of the Royists.

Engulfed in her personal loss and sorrow, Ellen courageously took upon herself the task of continuing Roy's work with rare dedication. With due respect to other stalwart Royists, it must

be recorded here that had it not been for Ellen's astounding zeal to serve the cause which was so dear to her husband, the *Radical Humanist* Weekly might not have then survived. Verily, she took the torch of enlightenment from the dead hand of Roy and kept it blazing in all its effulgence till she herself had passed away and orphaned us.

It is an irony of fate that after having escaped assassination at the hands of the Nazis in Germany, she died more or less in the same manner as Trotsky in Mexico. The mystery of her death has never been convincingly solved. I, for one, have not been satisfied with the superficial explanation that she died at the hands of a delinquent youngster for the sake of a paltry thievery of forty rupees only and that, too, when we know that she was fatally hit on the head with an iron rod in the same manner as in the case of Trotsky. Is there not some link between her liquidation and the fearless articles she had written in the *Radical Humanist* Weekly, vis-a-vis the burning of the maps in Governmental Archives?

Be that as it may, death comes to all. Death is the law of the universe where life is just a "biological accident". But one does not always die with one's mortal remains. It is the spirit that lives on. It is the ideas of abiding values strewn in four corners of the earth during one's lifetime which live on. This is not a mere consolation. It is a catalyst. It is a beacon light. We, who cherish the memory of the brave and noble lady that Ellen Roy was, can only repay our debt to her by following in her footsteps, just as she had done in following the footsteps of her equally brave and noble husband. ■ ■ ■